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THE LENTEN SERMON BOOK

CHRIST OR CONFUSION

Edited by

H. Torrey Walker



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THE WAGE-HOUR LAW OF THE KINGDOM

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Septuagesima

For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man
that is an householder . . .

Matthew 20:1

THE WAGE-HOUR LAW OF THE KINGDOM

Matthew 20:1

One of the most perplexing parables Jesus ever told centered about the wage-hour problem that arose at pay-off time among the laborers in a certain householder's vineyard. It was spoken to the disciples at a time when they had become "reward conscious" and were acting like politicians in regard to what they would get. Because the parable sounds like an economic problem in 1946, one is tempted to ask, "What does Jesus have to say about wages and hours that might prove helpful in settling some of the present labor disputes?"

This parable contains no tailor-made formula that will interest either capital or labor. Let a businessman run his business like this vineyard-keeper managed his, and he'll be out of business before the passing of not too many Saturday paydays. Hiring men at quitting time, and giving them the same pay check as those who started work at the crack of dawn, is hardly a model of business efficiency. Modern business insists on paying "so much per hour," no more and no less.

Yet, despite this managerial inefficiency and the philanthropic rewarding of men equally for unequal hours of toil, no man can accuse this householder of being unfair. He kept his contract to the letter. Any court would have upheld him. Those to whom, at sunrise, he promised to pay a day's wage for the day's work, received the stipulated wage. That was the agree-

ment. Those hired at later periods of the day, on the promise they would receive what was "right," found their employer to be openly generous, for each got more than he expected. Those who reached the vineyard during the cool evening hour, when others were ready to go home, had no complaint. And, of course, there should have been none from them, since each received a day's wage for a single hour of work. Complaints seldom come from the overpaid. In this instance, the complaint of "unfairness" was raised by the sunrise shift, not because they received less than their agreement, but because the sunset shift had received too much. Then, as now, people's dissatisfactions were based more often on what the other fellow received than on what they themselves were paid for what they did.

Modern business would brand this vineyard foreman's methods as inefficient. It would ask, "How could he ever expect to keep his old employees after a deal like that?" Capital wouldn't risk such a haphazard method of work and pay as that. Labor unions wouldn't tolerate it. Public opinion would disapprove. But this foreman felt that the business was his, and that he could hire and pay as he pleased. He plainly said so. If he wanted to pay a man more than he earned, that was his business.

In writing up this parable, St. Matthew quotes Jesus as saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto . . ." Like unto what? Like unto this demonstration of economic "unfairness"? Like unto a situation where the hardest workers get the least pay, and where the last ones hired are the first to line up at the paymaster's window? Is the kingdom of heaven like unto that?

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a man . . ." This man, who hired the laborers, was himself a hard worker who knew the weariness of long hours. Before the first member of the sunrise shift appeared in the marketplace, this man was on the

curbstone waiting to hire him. And all day long, trip after trip, he kept going back, calling more men to work. His vineyard had so much work that needed to be done that the householder could offer a job to anyone willing to work. The worker could either contract his labor for a specific wage, or trust the householder to give him "what was right."

This parable is more than a parable. It is the Gospel truth! A truth about the Lord's vineyard today, standing in need of workers at all hours of life and rewarding by grace and not by the clock. The first generation of Christians didn't complete the work. They couldn't. The Lord's vineyard, unlike any other vineyard, never gets "caught up." Here the harvest is always ready for the workers.

That first shift of Christians gave the vineyard their best efforts. They bore the burden and the heat of their day. They plowed the rocky ground; they planted the church; they watered the vines with their own blood. The Householder will not forget them. He knows their works. He will remember, and He who knows the labors of men's lives will reward with crowns those who render faithful service.

But their reward will be no greater than the reward of those called in the centuries that have followed. Anyone who does a single stroke of work for the Lord will receive a reward. God watches neither the clock of day nor the clock of time. The last man in the earth's final century will be made equal to the first worker of the first century. God's grace knows neither first nor last.

In the Judgment will Peter, who gave his all from the time he left the nets, complain because Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus got under the wire at the eleventh hour? Will John complain because someone in the second or sixteenth century receives a reward as great as his? Will Paul complain

because some man or woman late in the fiftieth century receives the reward as great as his? Indeed, these saints and all Christians until the end of time, should rejoice that the kingdom of heaven *is* like unto a man whose heart is so great that he rewards even the late-comer — the last as well as the first; the first as well as the last. In the final analysis, rewards for kingdom-work will always be in the nature of gifts, not wages. Thank God, the kingdom *is* like that!

Not all of us are called at the early hours of life. Not all of us begin work in the Lord's vineyard when we are children. Many of us do not hear the call until the third and sixth hours —and millions with graying temples, at this eleventh hour, still remain uncalled and unemployed—stand idle in the marketplace of life, while all around us we see the evidences that the Lord's vineyard needs workers now.

America, despite her church statistics about membership, is still a long way from being a fruitful vineyard for the Lord. Right here there is much to be done. There are race prejudices, as stubborn as boulders in a hillside vineyard, that must be grubbed out, if the vines of Christ are going to grow. There are shoots of new life that are growing wild, that need to be tied up to Christian trellises and pruned with Christian love. There are high stony walls of isolationism, spiritual and otherwise, that must be torn down, never to be rebuilt on a scale that includes less than the whole world. There are weeds of godless secularism in our homes and schools and in the entertainment fields, that challenge the very life of God's vineyard. More than all these, there is the vast harvest of souls waiting to be harvested for Christ. Work—yes, an endless amount of it, if our world is ever to become better. Thank God, the kingdom *is* like unto a man who calls men and women, boys and girls, from the earliest to the latest hours of life, who still believes

that the vineyard can be made fruitful *if* the laborers will respond to His call to work.

Since the discovery of the atom bomb, one need no longer fear saying, "at this eleventh hour." At this eleventh hour of your life, or of the world's life, the work in the Lord's vineyard still requires workers. Christless lands are in need of the Gospel. Their illiterate and diseased sons and daughters are ready to abandon their stone gods and suicidal medicines if Christian missionaries come into their countless villages. The very lands in Europe from which our fathers and mothers came are leveled like a vineyard scorched and consumed by a mighty conflagration, while the new shoots of a new life are already springing up, with insufficient laborers to care for them. The whole world is a vineyard in which every vine-row needs cultivation *now*. If we are to have sweet grapes tomorrow, we must care for the vineyard now, and we are the only laborers God has.

Are you working? If so, be faithful until your dying day. You are engaged in the greatest work in the world. Don't be discouraged. Don't worry about what you will get out of it. The kingdom of heaven is like unto a man whose heart is so filled with good will, grace, and generosity that anyone who does anything to make the vineyard grow will receive from the Owner a gift more than he expects; yea, more than he deserves.

Are you idling as you are growing older? Are your knees unsoiled? Is your back unburdened? Are your hands uncaloused? Are you doing nothing while the vineyard's production potential is kept down because of lack of laborers? Are you letting down your Lord when He did so much for you, and when He asks only that you work with Him in His world vineyard?

Why stand ye idle? You may have a few more years, a few months, or only a few days left to give to the work. For

the vineyard's sake, give what time you may have left. Go out of life a worker—rather than an idler! You have been eating of the fruit all these years, while others have borne the heat and burden of the day! Is this fair? Delay no longer! Your sun is going down. Another day of delay may be too late. Tell the Householder, "I'll work," and the Householder will reward you for your willingness, and not for your time.

At this very moment, it is the first hour for some and the eleventh hour for others. There stands the Lord's vineyard, in need of your most consecrated efforts. As this Gospel is being preached today, the Householder is coming into the marketplace of your life, calling YOU for kingdom-work. Will you go, or will you wait? His reward for your life will be gracious. It will be more than we expect, more than we deserve.

Sexagesima

SEED GRAINS OF SALVATION

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Sexagesima

A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. And others fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold.

Luke 8:5-8

SEED GRAINS OF SALVATION

Luke 8:5-8

"Words are but pictures of our thoughts" and the effect these vocal pictures have upon our lives is amazing. It is no empty truism to say that we live *on* and *by* words. With words we convey our thoughts; we impart our ideas; we display our feelings; we unburden our hearts. In words there is embodied a strange power. Words can soothe or embitter. Words can bless or defile. Words can wound and destroy. The prisoner before the bar of justice awaits with bated breath the words of the judge, "It is the decision of this Court that . . ." A word decides his future. Words can enthuse and set aflame the allegiance of men. Words can give direction to a whole nation. Indeed, words have founded our nation. The Declaration of Independence is nothing more or less than the *word* of a people seeking to establish a new nation. Our Constitution is the word law of the land — the will of the people expressed in words setting forth the principles of self-government. Words bind nations the world over. Treaties between nations are but principles of relationship in words. Words are the grist that goes into the mill of civilization to be ground out as the bread of life among men.

However, the word of man, with all its power and potential, is as nothing when weighed in the balance with the Word of God. "By the Word of God were the heavens formed; and

all the hosts of them." "God uttered his voice and the earth melted." "And God said, 'Let there be light, let there be life, let there be order,' and it was so." These are not mere figures of speech. They are foundation facts. By the Word of the Lord were all things made that were made. The prophet Isaiah sets forth the principle of the power of God's Word in the phrase, "My word shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I send it." The will of God is accomplished through His Word. God's Word is the law of the universe. This principle is fundamental to the understanding of the revelation of God's truth as it is set forth in the Old Testament.

Christ, in our Gospel for the day, presents this principle as it applies to man. In this parable of the sower the *seed* is a constant. It does not change with the type of soil upon which it falls. It is the *condition* of the soil that is held up for scrutiny. The sower is not important. No mention is made of his method. The fact that he is sowing the seed is all that seems to matter. Perhaps it is worth while to lay some emphasis on the fact that he was a sower, which implies that he knew his responsibility. People in every age have been critical of those charged with the responsibilities of the sacred office of the ministry, but the potency of the Word of God does not depend upon personality. Christ Himself did not win all hearers to salvation. The seed is the same Word of God regardless of the one proclaiming it. There is no doubt that the parable is meant to teach a truth concerning the condition and type of hearer. Therefore, it would not be profitable for us to further consider the sower at this time, but rather to turn our attention directly to the seed and the soil upon which it is scattered.

The seed is the Word of God: the seed grain of salvation. As has been said, the seed or word is a constant. The Word of

God does not vary one jot or tittle. It is the same yesterday, today, and forever. The Word that called into existence the universe is the same Word that promises the very numbering of the hairs of your head. The Word herein identified is the picturing of God's thoughts. The Word is the revelation of His will and purposes for man and the universe. God's Word has remained constant from the very foundations of the world. It is immutable through all eternity. There is no problem for our solution in this fact. God's Word is *God's Word*. Thus saith the Lord God Almighty. Hence, the soil — the heart of man — is our problem.

In our consideration of the heart of man and its response to the Word of God, it is necessary for us to understand that God has laid down no decree by which some are singled out for salvation and others for damnation. God has established the universe by law, that is true, but He has placed no impediment in the heart of any man to condition his response to His Word of Truth. Indeed, God's call goes out to all alike, so that every man, woman, and child is forced of his own volition to choose between belief and unbelief. God has created man a free agent. He must choose whom he will serve. If man aspires to the high position of sonship with God, he must prove himself capable of exercising righteous judgment. He must recognize the Truth and gain his complete freedom through that Truth. God's Word is Truth.

Four types or conditions of heart are characterized for us in the parable. *Wayside-heart*, who receives the Word of God upon its hardened surface and because of its brazen, calloused condition does not enfold and nourish it. The writer of Hebrews pleads eloquently against this condition, "Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts" (4:7). Christ expressly describes this type of heart as one that is under the influence

of the devil, who, having full access to the heart of the individual, takes away the treasure of Truth that it may not effect the pleasure of God in the salvation of this man's soul.

Rocky-ground-heart, who receives the Word of God upon its thin, unfertile, expectant surface, embraces it with joy. But lacking in depth of appreciation, the Word soon withers and dies. The devil is quick to offer his wares and this man loses his chance for salvation.

Thorny-ground-heart, who receives the Word of God in the midst of the thorns and briers of this world's cares and pleasures, by its very neglect, permits the Word to be stifled and choked. This is fertile ground. This heart is capable of rich and luxuriant growth, but it is open to any kind of seed. The devil is sure to creep in and plant this soil with weedy half-truth and evil. The seed of the devil is the selfish pleasure of the moment. He relies upon man's natural greed, man's desire for material security, and careless allegiance to truth to work his downfall.

Good-ground-heart, who receives the word of God and embraces it into the mellow, moist, warm depth, there to nourish and cherish it for growth into maturity and harvest a hundred-fold. This heart keeps constant watch over its treasure. The tares and weeds of evil are constantly uprooted and cast into the fire. Here the devil meets his match. "One little word o'erthrows him."

In none of these cases is the principle of the immutability of God's Word violated. The potter can form vessels no better than the clay with which he works. So the power of God's Word is limited by the type and condition of the individual heart. The hardened heart is not calloused because Nature, Providence, or divine decree willed it so. It is hard by the very fact that it chooses to be hard. So it is with each condition and

type of heart. The Word of God is sown to each heart just as though each heart would be receptive as good ground for its planting. There is no distinction made among men's hearts except by the individual response to the Word. The fault is man's. If man wills to believe, then in good and honest faith he may plead with the saint, "Lord, I believe, help Thou my unbelief." If he chooses not to believe, then is his damnation certain. God can only call. It is man's option to accept or refuse. God stretches forth His saving hand. Man needs but to grasp it. Man must grasp it. God never withdraws His offer for salvation. Man, by his constant refusal to heed, places himself in a state of habitual opposition and thereby seals his damnation even before judgment is pronounced of God.

This parable proclaims a richer application for us in that it embraces the cross of Christ. The revelation of God was not complete until Christ returned to God and sent the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, who leads us into all Truth. When Christ told this parable to His disciples and gave to them its meaning, it was of necessity limited to the revelation of their day. Now is our salvation clearer than when He was yet with us. Now the whole plan of God is revealed. Now we have the Word made flesh. Now we have the Example of the Word living among men and showing them the Way. "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." Before the advent of Christ, the Word of God was an intangible. With the advent, life and death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, the Word of God was given revelation in time. It has become a fact in history. This in no way limits the limitless Word of God. What it does do is to bring into perspective the will of God as a dynamic motivating force in the life of the believer. The Word of God is not a Person with all the allure of perfection. It is easy to say, "God is Love," but this statement is not freighted with the

force that accompanies the fact that "Christ is our example of a loving God."

The seed of the parable is for us the fullest revealed Word of God. It is Old Testament prophecy, *Thus saith the Lord*; it is New Testament fact, expressed through *the person of Christ* — the only answer to Pilate's question, "What is truth?" There is no other means of salvation. The Old Testament Jew had the Law to guide him. The contemporary follower of Christ lived by an expanding revelation. Each day Christ brought a richer and fuller picture of God's Word and will. How often have we thought, "If only I could have lived when Christ lived." But do we not appreciate that our view is much clearer than the view of Peter. To Peter the plan of redemption must have been much like a jig-saw puzzle into which the pieces were being fitted day by day by Christ. For us the plan of redemption is a completed picture of God's Word and will. Indeed it is a series of pictures all centering in the life and activity and work of Christ.

Furthermore, there is for us the weight of two thousand years of history added to the seed in the parable. To the disciples, Christ was giving a new revelation of God's Word, something which had not been in the Book of Truth previous to then. Not so for us. We come upon the Word of God in a time when we can review the experience of countless others in the same relationship with God. From the very lives of men who have accepted the Word with good and honest hearts, from those who have accepted it amid the cares and pleasures of life, from those who received the Word with joy only for the moment, and from those who in their hardness of heart rejected it; from all of these we can learn a fuller meaning from the parable.

"He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Hear as Christ

offers to you the pure wisdom of the ages. Hear as Christ offers to you a God of love who will accept you as His son and heir to His kingdom. Hear as Christ offers to you the only means of eternal life. Hear as Christ offers your sinful soul before the throne of Grace from the very Cross itself. Hear as Christ offers to you the "peace of God which passeth all understanding." Hear, friend, as the apostle cries, "Thou art the Christ! Thou hast the Words!" Respond, friend, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth!"

Almighty God, Thy Word is cast
Like seed into the ground;
O may it grow in humble hearts,
And righteous fruits abound.

Amen.

Quinquagesima

THE PASSION PATHWAY

J. M. SCHEDLER

Trinity Lutheran Church

VICTORIA, TEXAS

Quinquagesima

Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: And they shall scourge him, and put him to death; and the third day he shall rise again. And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the wayside begging: And hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant. And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. And he cried, saying, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me. And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried so much the more, Thou son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him: and when he was come near, he asked him, saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee. And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God.

Luke 18:31-43

THE PASSION PATHWAY

Luke 18:31-43

"Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished." This significant statement of our Saviour summarizes the entire Gospel. "Behold, *we* go up to Jerusalem." Thus Jesus invites His disciples to accompany Him as He prepares for the last time to go up to the city of David, where He, the holy Son of God, is to be crucified, a sacrifice for our sins. This going up to Jerusalem is a vastly different journey from the one which we considered when the twelve-year-old Jesus went up for the first time with His parents to the holy city to observe the Passover festival. This time He is also going to Jerusalem for the same festival, but now He is to be the real Passover Lamb of God offered up for the sins of the world.

"Behold, we go up to Jerusalem." This is true also for us. Today we stand at the threshold of the blessed Passion season, that season in which we accompany our Lord in spirit on the way to sorrow to Jerusalem and the Cross. This way of sorrow is to become a way of blessing for us.

"Behold, We Go Up to Jerusalem!"

This word of our Saviour is the central thought of our sermon today. In unforgettable words Jesus indicates the purpose of His journey to Jerusalem: "All things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished.

For He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: And they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death; and the third day He shall rise again."

The frequent journeys of our Lord up to Jerusalem, since that first visit of the twelve-year-old Jesus to the temple with His parents, were all designed for the accomplishment of the things written by the prophets concerning the Son of man. During the three years of His public ministry, He revealed Himself in the temple as the real prophet, upon whom the Spirit of the Lord rested. On the one hand He revealed Himself as a second Moses and Elijah upholding the law of God, and on the other hand He spoke in a friendly manner to the weary and heavy-laden and sought to raise up the bruised reed, as Isaiah had prophesied many years before.

This journey of Jesus to Jerusalem has a different significance. Now Jesus goes to Jerusalem in order to complete the fulfillment of prophecies which the Scriptures of the Old Covenant had recorded concerning Him. Yes, He goes to achieve His chief work. And His chief work was not the prophetic office, important as this was, but the High-Priestly office, in which he offers Himself the sacrifice for the sins of the world. All the prophets had written of this. The work of His High-Priestly office was the central theme of all prophecies from the first one given in paradise to that of Zechariah, which proclaimed in great detail the occurrences of Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday. These myriad prophecies the Lord desires now to fulfill. His head will be bruised. He will as the true Isaac carry His wood to Calvary's hill. He will permit Himself to be slain on the uplifted cross as the true Passover Lamb. All these prophecies had been made concerning the Saviour. And Jesus fulfills them all. He does not allow Him-

self to become frightened by glancing at the innumerable and indescribable sufferings which await Him at the hands of His enemies, nor through the pleadings of His friends, who beseech Him with, "Lord, save Thyself." No, He will not save Himself. He will do everything that the Father has sent Him to do. He desires earnestly to bear the sins of the whole world as the true and only Lamb of God. Therefore, determined and unflinching He faces toward Jerusalem. And for this reason He speaks to His disciples, "Behold, *we* go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: and they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death; and the third day He shall rise again."

The very things our Lord proclaimed were actually accomplished a few weeks later. There, in the beautiful Garden of Gethsemane, before Caiaphas, and before Pilate, and on Calvary, He was mocked, and spitefully treated, and spit on by the Jews and Gentiles. He was whipped and put to death in the manner prophesied by Isaiah in the fifty-third chapter, and by David in the Twenty-second Psalm. Let us always observe that He did not close His eyes in death on the cross until He knew that everything, even the last and the least, was accomplished, in order that the Scriptures might be fulfilled.

"Paschal Lamb, by God appointed,
All our sins on Thee were laid;
By almighty love anointed,
Thou hast full atonement made.
All Thy people are forgiven
Through the virtue of Thy Blood;
Opened is the gate of heaven;
Peace is made 'twixt man and God."

But our Lord does not desire to go up to Jerusalem alone. He does not say: "Behold, I go up to Jerusalem." He specifically states: "Behold, *we* go up to Jerusalem." He thus definitely indicates that it is His desire that His disciples shall accompany Him. And He desires that we accompany Him today, as the twelve disciples did then and during the Lenten Season he would have us go with Him in a very special way.

How shall we accompany Him on this Passion journey? The answer is clearly indicated in the second half of our Gospel Lesson. We can summarize the answer to this question briefly by saying: We shall not accompany our Lord on His Passion journey as His disciples did, but rather like the blind man by the wayside near Jericho.

The disciples understood none of the things that Jesus had mentioned as reasons for this trip to Jerusalem. They did not understand the actual purpose of their Lord and of His great work of redemption, even though they had been with Him for three years. They received no special blessing from this journey with Jesus to Jerusalem. If the Lenten season this year is to bring us a special blessing, we dare not emulate the disciples, but must learn the lessons from the attitude of the blind man.

The Gospel for this day tells us four things about this man. First, that he addresses Jesus as the son of David; second, that he calls to Jesus and keeps on calling until the Lord stands still and asks him what he desires; third, that he earnestly prays, "Lord, that I may receive my sight"; and fourth, that after his prayer had been answered he glorified God and followed Jesus. The blind man puts the disciples of Jesus to shame when it comes to understanding the person and mission of our Lord. He describes Jesus of Nazareth as the son of David, the Messiah of Israel, the promised king, despite the fact that he undoubtedly had already discovered that the leaders of Israel despised

Jesus. And because he acknowledged Him as such, he calls to Him and does not allow himself to be silenced by the rebukes of the crowd, but continues to call with a louder voice until the Lord stands still. Therefore, he answers Jesus' question, "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" with "Lord, that I may receive my sight!" He indicates that he firmly believes that his prayer will be answered, and when he receives his sight he follows Jesus and glorifies God. With special joy he undoubtedly joins in the praises of the multitude. And while he possibly did not yet understand the full purpose of our Lord's Passion, he undoubtedly was one of the first who on Pentecost had their spiritual eyes opened concerning the last journey of Jesus to Jerusalem.

So we should also accompany our Lord on the journey to Jerusalem this year. We should not allow ourselves to become confused by the suffering of the sinless Son of God, but acknowledge the suffering and dying Lord as our Saviour and Redeemer. During this Passion season let us pray to him: "Christ, Thou Lamb of God, have mercy upon me, that I may receive my sight" — and when he hears our sincere and penitent cry, which He will, as He did the cry of the blind man by the wayside near Jericho, then let us not forget the praise and the thanks. Let us praise Him with our voices, but above all things let us praise Him with our lives by following Him faithfully and obediently:

"Jesus, may our hearts be burning
With more fervent love for Thee;
May our eyes be ever turning
To Thy Cross of agony;
Till in glory, parted never
From the blessed Saviour's side,
Graven in our hearts forever,
Dwell the Cross, the Crucified."

To the weary-hearted wanderer who has long chased the mirage of pleasure, or of ambition, or of wealth, Jesus speaks today and says: "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem!" And all who truly accompany Him on this sacred journey this year will heed the Saviour's invitation: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me: for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden light." Justified by faith in the Son of God, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, you will find that repose which you have so long unsuccessfully sought in an ensnaring world. The Saviour's commandments you will discover to be not grievous, His service to be perfect freedom. The close of life, which reveals to so many only the illusions they have followed, will to you furnish matter for adoration and grateful retrospection. Death itself will be stripped of its terrible sting. It will prove the portal through which you shall enter upon joys infinite in degree, and everlasting in duration; while through eternity you will bless that divine grace which first led you to abandon forever the vain pursuit of walking your own way. Behold, *we* go up to Jerusalem.

Ash Wednesday

CHRIST OR CONFUSION

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Ash Wednesday

Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them. But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.

Matthew 21:42-46

Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

1 Peter 2:6-12

CHRIST OR CONFUSION

Matthew 21:42-46

1 Peter 2:6-12

Christ is the cornerstone. Christianity is the new order. The measurements of future building must square themselves with God's plumb line if man's house is to endure. Otherwise, his experience will be only confusion and finally destruction.

Jesus uttered His words during the early part of Passion Week. On Palm Sunday He had ridden into Jerusalem, symbolic of His kingship. Then began a series of parables, each bearing a warning of disaster. In the midst of these parables, our Saviour asked the chief priests and Pharisees if they had ever read about the builders rejecting the stone which finally became the cornerstone. They were no doubt familiar with the words of the text because the psalmist had recorded them in Psalm 118:22-23. When they perceived that Jesus referred to them, they sought to kill Him. Even today, the majority of people either ignore Christ or laugh and scoff Him out of their lives.

The resultant destruction of two great world wars, together with the fear of total annihilation by the terrible atom bomb, certainly brings the text up to date. Many of our best-known scientists have become today's preachers, emphasizing that Christ's way alone can save us from ourselves. However, the world walks on through the darkness, stumbling and being ground down.

God's New Order. All of God's Old Testament promises pointed toward the Incarnation — the day when the Son of God would take on flesh and walk in our midst. Through His birth, teachings, example, death, and resurrection, He was to become the cornerstone of a glorious building which He so often called "The kingdom of God." According to our text, this wonderful eternal order was "The Lord's doings" and it was to be "marvelous in our eyes." Indeed, all Christians everywhere can vouch for the truth of those statements. That kingdom has passed through the hands of wicked Pharaoh, of irresponsible Pilate, of betraying Judas; through times of horrible persecution, through a global war, and today, it sparkles in grandeur and beauty. While all about is confusion and chaos, within are God and order and the children of Christ.

A New Order of Rebirth. Every man who passes through her gates is "born again." It is a kingdom of rebirth. In Christ we become a "new creation." The "seed of regeneration" planted in our hearts by baptism grows into fullness within us until we become like Jesus Himself. Someone has said, "A Christian man is one in whom Christ finds a Bethlehem for His birth and a Calvary for His resurrection."

A New Order of Allegiance and Love. All Christians are "royal priests" guided in all their administrations by their High Priest, Jesus Christ. The will of God is the guiding power in their lives. The atmosphere of their abundant life is the love of God. God cares, and so do His true children. Hatreds and intolerance have no place within the hearts of Christians. On and on this kingdom multiplies from three thousand on the day of Pentecost to seven hundred million today. The "living stones" are being laid by the divine Mason and someday the building of God will be finished. Inside will be order. Outside will be confusion and hell.

The New Order Rejected. Someone has said that if a leader should appear whom everyone could behold as truly virtuous, everyone would immediately accept and follow him. That statement has been proven untrue. When Jesus Christ walked in the world it was said: "Never man spake as this man" and "He went about doing good." He was virtue itself. Yet they crucified Him. After they had mocked Him, spat in His face, beaten Him with whips, and stained His face with blood by crushing His brow with a cruel crown of thorns, they led Him to Pilate, who sought the sympathy of the mob by exclaiming, "Behold the Man!" At sight of Him they seemed to grow more bloodthirsty and cried out, "Crucify Him!" The priests, the rulers of the nation, the soldiers of internationalism, and the mob, all joined in hanging Him to Calvary's cross. He was rejected of men. And since that day every generation has "crucified Him afresh."

Wherever and whenever men reject Him, confusion and chaos are the result individually and collectively. In our day we have viewed the madness of Fascism, Nazism and Communism. They were the weeds that grew in the world's patch because Christ was rejected by their leaders. The present low morality of America is the result of treating Christ lightly. To so many, the preaching of the cross is still foolishness. To believers, it is the wisdom and power of God.

Why Were Christ and His New Order Rejected? Four reasons may be given, all of which reveal the very heart of Christ's Gospel and the pillars of His kingdom.

First, They Rejected Christ because He proclaimed that God Cares. He taught that God was concerned about people everywhere without respect of person. Such a thought broke down the class barriers and these religious leaders who thought themselves better than others became concerned and angry. While

we admire Christ for associating with publicans and sinners and moral perverts to save them, His enemies condemned Him. When He healed a man on the Sabbath and they criticized Him for that, He answered by saying: "Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the Sabbath day?" How much better is a man than an ox! To Jesus Christ God's chapel doors always swung inward for crushed humanity. When He made whips of cords and drove the traders from the temple, saying, "My Father's house is a house of prayer and ye have made it a den of thieves," the traders never forgot. He preached that God cares. He is interested in all people. Nationalism, blood, inheritance, class hatreds, and race hatreds, were all condemned by Him. "Go ye into all the world," He said. God's blessings are alike for all men. Because He preached that God cares, they crucified Him.

Second, He Demanded Spiritual Renewal. To Nicodemus He said, "Ye must be born again." That might be all right for publicans and sinners, but not for the religious leaders. They were proud of their social status. Such a concept as Jesus preached would divest them of all prestige. So they said, "Away with Him!"

Jesus taught that Christianity was life. There could be no two compartments to life, one for belief and one for everyday living. Faith and action must be one and the same. To enter the kingdom there must be spiritual renewal for everyone high and low.

So they crucified Him.

Also, He Demanded Absolute Allegiance. He was the cornerstone of the new order and every living stone must fit into the building according to God's plumb line. A Christian must not merely subscribe to his creed and then live the old life but he must be mastered by the Master himself. "What though

Christ a thousand times in Bethlehem be born, if He be not born in thee?"

There must be a full abandonment of our dearest self and an absolute commitment to Him. The sermon of Sunday may move us to tears. That is all very good. However, our everyday living must be the proof that Christ's teachings have gripped us.

Sensuous, frivolous Herod, who wanted to be entertained by the miracles of Jesus, mocked Him to scorn. Sensuality — drink, gambling and vice — always says: "Crucify!" Judas, so selfish that he could even steal from the church's purse, betrayed Him to the enemy. Greed always says: "Crucify!" Pilate was so interested in his position and his own welfare, that even in the face of innocence, he condemned Him to death. Self-interest always shouts: "Crucify!" The sad thing is that these men were broken and ground to powder. Worldliness was dearer to the hearts of these sinners than the eternal things of God. We must learn from their lives and their deaths that it is Christ or destruction. And, to be Christ's we must give up our dearest selves and give Him full allegiance.

There are so many half-and-half men. They sort of give to God their tongues but the world possesses their hearts. They know not the meaning of denying themselves, taking up the cross, and following Him. The church records would reveal the fact that their pews could be draped in black — empty pews. Indifference and callousness are fast making them ill-fitted for the new order. Christ asks for allegiance, full and hearty.

Jesus said, "*Christians must love one another.*" They must be brotherly. His famous words were, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, that ye love one another." Love is not only the essence of God but also the atmosphere of the

Christian heart. Love is the strong emotion which rules heaven, and that same mighty virtue must direct the heart of every Christian.

For that teaching they crucified Him. Their intolerance answered: "I shall hate whom I please. Love is a sentimental thing. It makes men weak. We shall not love these underlings and sinners." And so animosities, hatreds, and wars continued to grind men to powder.

That crucifying voice is not only of yesterday. It speaks just as vehemently today. Many Christians down deep in their hearts believe that they are better than some other people. For true Christians such a thought sounds a call to repentance. And repentance is the only way into God's New Order.

These principles for which men crucified Christ are those which have become the roots of democracy. All good and lasting relationships have their cornerstone in Christ and His teachings. There is no aristocracy in Christianity. And, thank God, there is no arithmetic in God's grace. His grace flows abundantly into any heart that will open its flood gate by repentance and allegiance. When Christ enters the heart and takes possession, a new life has begun. Then the Holy Spirit starts to create the new creature and to build him into the new order. You see, God cannot carve rotten wood. As God hews the living stone into shape, He cements it to the other living stones by the precious blood of the Lamb, then all during time He polishes it by the discipline of the Holy Ghost and fits it solidly into His vast edifice.

Today when science stands baffled, and education cannot find the way, and philosophy flounders in worldly wisdom, Christ is the answer. He has the answer to sin, sorrow, and sickness. And He has opened the window to another world, so that Christians can breathe a new air of hope.

When Thomas exclaimed, "My Lord and my God," God had made a new man for the new order. When Saul watched Stephen martyred, God was there starting the powerful life of Paul for the new order. When persecution scattered the Christians so that fleeing from Jerusalem they entered other towns and cities, people exclaimed, "New men have come to town and they are turning us upside down." Grasped by Christian belief they had left the old way and were new men, giving their full allegiance to Christ in expressing their love for humanity.

John Masfield's poem quotes Pilate's wife as asking this question of the centurion: "Do you think He is dead?" "No," comes the reply. "He has only been let loose in the world where neither Jew nor Greek can touch His truth."

My friends! We are the dispensers of that truth. We are the builders of His New Order. We are the hope of the world. Put your hand over your heart! Do you belong fully to Christ? Then lift your eyes to a horizon line which is for you a blaze of glory. Let your lips move under divine direction as you tell the world: Christ is the Master, obey Him. He is the Light, seek Him. He is the Way, walk in Him. He is Life, desire Him. He is Wisdom, follow Him. He is the Fairest, love Him. He is Riches, ask Him. He is Grace, trust Him. He is Nobility, serve Him. He is Justice, fear Him. He is Immortality, hope in Him.

Christ or Confusion? Christ is the answer.

Invocavit

CHRIST ON THE OFFENSIVE

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Invocavit

Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be
tempted of the devil.

Matthew 4:1

CHRIST ON THE OFFENSIVE

Matthew 4:1

The shadow of the cross veils the Lenten season. The events of Christ's life during those critical days which led up to Calvary have often been distorted. It is the total Christ who is to be kept in view. In whatever scene the Saviour appears the picture is incomplete. The Lenten study of Christ should not warp the view of the victorious Son of God. Whatever part of His suffering is the subject for meditation or study, it should never overshadow the full purpose of His coming to earth. Christ was always on the offensive. There was no doubt in His mind as to success. The fellowship between God and man would be restored through Him.

Man had always fought a losing battle. He was more often on the defensive than the offensive. One is prone to read into the life of the Son of man a defensive program. He was "made in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2:7) but He did not possess the weaknesses of the flesh. His humanity was always the perfect counterpart of His divinity. The devil never had the lead on Him, nor was He helplessly oppressed by the devil.

This offensive program is incorporated in the memorable scene of the temptation, the Gospel for the First Sunday in Lent. However deeply the sufferings and sorrows of the Saviour are presented, this offensive program should never be lost sight of. One dare not read into His life a defeatist concept.

As representative of humanity He heard the call of John. Jesus followed with the multitude from Galilee to the Jordan to hear the prophet John urge repentance, "for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 3:2). As a part of His identification with the human race He permitted John to baptize Him. He felt the call of His mission. The time was at hand to begin His ministry.

Christ needed to be alone. The wilderness was nigh. "He was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness." The consciousness of a work was heavy upon Him. Nothing in humanity could aid Him at this time. It was His Father's business that was urgent. Jesus needed to be alone with the Father. He desired a clear understanding of the work before Him. Life on the earth had revealed to Him the power and effect of sin. He had seen it in His own country. He had witnessed it in His own community. It was prevalent among His own brethren. He *had to do* something about it. Christ knew He was the way of redemption. It was up to Him.

The commending voice of the Father at baptism and the power of the Spirit upon Him reassured his consciousness of strength from on high. Confident of His heavenly Father's support, He felt the inner insistence that the time had come to present Himself to the people as the One who had been sent from above. The knowledge of His mission to humanity was maturing into the decision to go forth and proclaim "the year of the Lord."

He had sought the seclusion of nature but realized that He was not alone. Instead of having the privacy of the wilderness to Himself, He found that there was another, the very enemy of all that was good, true, and pure. The contemplative hours which had given Him so much comfort and peace were now disturbed by Satan, the prince of this world. The woodlands

into which He had entered for peace and meditation were to become a battlefield.

A work was to be done, but before it could be accomplished He was to meet His archenemy, the devil. The wiles of the evil one were to be turned on Him in the quietude of nature. At the time of the exulting joy in His mission He was required to meet the powers of darkness and evil. Stirred by this intruder from the deep reveries of the ministry before Him, He became conscious of human need. Time had passed unobserved. Night and day seemed unimportant. But now, in this presence, the needs of the body became prevalent. The demands of the flesh were upon Him. Satan was aware of His condition. He also knew the decision of Christ to begin His mission of salvation for a lost world. Therefore, Satan suggests, "If Thou be the Son of God."

Had not God the Father acknowledged Him as His beloved Son at the baptism? The echoes of those words were still in His ear. The Son of God had been His name before He laid aside His glory and power to become man. The fellowship that had existed between Him and His Father before all worlds had not been broken. He was still the Son of God. It was His name from heaven and all the associations therewith. The Father had promised Him this assurance to carry on the work which was before Him. It was in His hands to accomplish. No one could deny Him this power.

"Command that these stones be made bread." They were in the shape of loaves. His body craved bread. It was in His power to carry out the suggestion made by Satan. This evil one tempted Him, asking for a demonstration of His power. At the height of His spiritual exaltation Christ knew that the Father was with Him and would grant anything He would ask. Jesus had come not to rescue Himself but humanity. He was in

the Father's hands. Any act on His part to doubt the care of His heavenly Father would fail to restore the trust which had been lost in Eden. His confidence in the Father would not be shattered by doubt. As the decrees of heaven had been made so would they be carried out. There was no place in His armor that the darts of doubt could penetrate. He was the second Adam. He must carry the assault on the enemy of mankind. He must be on the offensive.

"It is written." The weapon was out of its sheath. "The sword of the Spirit . . . is the Word of God" (Eph. 6:17). Christ used the weapon that had been given to humanity centuries before.

"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." The hoarders and the hungry bodies of mankind do not make a complete picture of the world. To satisfy the flesh is only a small part of living. There is a satisfaction that comes only with the fulfillment of the will and way of God. One may be physically satiated but spiritually starved. The cry of the Israelites of old, "When shall we get bread in the wilderness?" was answered. The manna came, according to God's word. The Son of God, confident of the Father's care, rejected the tempter's suggestion. The temptation to distrust failed.

The very weapon used by Christ to thwart the onslaught of Satan was now used against Him. His trust in the Father's care became the second great temptation. With powers all his own, the devil took the Christ to one of the pinnacles of the temple structure. The temple was God's house. The great presentations of God would be fulfilled there. The hearts and minds of the worshipers would be inclined to accept any miraculous performance. The assembled crowds were before Him. Satan began again, "If Thou be the Son of God." Christ had

been willing before to trust His heavenly Father. That trust was embodied in the sonship. There was a mission to be fulfilled. One way was to present Himself now to the people. This would show them that He was from above. The protection of the Father had been assured Him. Now was the time to place implicit trust in the divine care.

"It is written." This was from the lips of Satan himself. The Word of God is free to all. At times the wicked appear more skilled in its use, but God's Word must be properly used. Satan's reference to the Scripture was only a half-truth. Christ understood the misquotation. The laws of nature are to be respected or the consequences must be paid. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12). Overconfidence is just as bad as underconfidence. God's power is not to be used for selfish purposes. The plans of God are not frustrated by man. There is only one right way. The Son of God would not change that which was right.

The revealed Word came again in all its fullness from the lips of Christ, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (Deut. 6:16). Confidence in God relates itself to all of life. The service to be rendered was in His hands. There is a way to be found and that will be God's way. Truth in the hands of God is the greatest of all defenses. Christ, as a dutiful Son, knew the Father and trusted Him in every way. The Father's blessings are always upon those who trust in the safety of His love in the line of duty. Christ met His archenemy again and foiled Him by taking the offensive.

There was work to be done. The way was to be long and hard. There would be abuse, pain, sorrow, anguish, and death on the cross. The road ahead was truly a "way of sorrow." It would be traveled with bloody footprints. The cry would be "if it be possible, let this cup pass from me" (Matt. 26:39),

before the mission was fulfilled. Christ knew it would be the price of blood. Was there no other way? Would it be possible to make a compromise? Would not the end justify the means for once? Nothing was more important than the winning of the nations of the world from sin and evil. That was His mission. He came to lead the way for all humanity.

Satan suggested a way out. He presented a short cut. He indicated taking a chance. From the mountain top, in a mystic vision by the powers of his own making, the devil presented to Christ "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them." He put all he had in a last effort to thwart the mission of the Son of God. The bloody pathway need not be taken. The Christ need not tread the hard way to the hearts of the nations of the world. All Satan asked was an acknowledgment of his power and authority in return for the glory and opulence of the world. He desired a share in the future of mankind. The devil wanted recognition as one with Godlike authority. "If Thou wilt fall down and worship me."

Many in the hands of the devil have sold their souls for a mess of pottage. Multitudes have given up eternity for a purse of gold. Christ had come to show the better way, which would in the end bring joy, peace, mercy, and love. The choice He made was the way of God. From the book of life he quoted, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." Christ was always on the offensive. He was never on the defensive. He went farther and farther into the territory of the devil, even to the "descent into hell."

Christ is at the head of His church today. He is the shepherd of the flock. He has promised to be with His own "even unto the end of the world." The equipment that is necessary for battle has been provided. The Son of God has assured the Church that the gates of hell shall not be able to prevail. He is

asking for a Church on the offensive. Two thousand years and so little accomplished! Each generation has heard the Master giving His marching orders through the Scriptures. "Go ye into all the world" means moving forward. It speaks of an offensive plan. The demoralizing and weakening influence of doubt, overconfidence, and compromise have time and again thrown the armies of the Lord on the defensive. It is only love, humility, and expectancy that will awaken the Church to an advancing victorious body. The Church of Christ is calling now for men and women who are willing to go "all out" for the kingdom.

You must respond, for upon you and your fellow-members of the Church of Christ rests the responsibility for carrying the banners of the kingdom into unconquered lives throughout the world. Christ is ever on the offensive — you must be for His sake. Amen.

Reminiscere

COURAGEOUS FAITH

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Reminiscere

Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy upon me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshiped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

Matthew 15:21-28

COURAGEOUS FAITH

Matthew 15:21-28

The story of a conquering faith is set forth in the Gospel lesson for today. The child in the narrative is described as suffering from serious physical and mental disability. The anxious mother, seeking help, exercises a faith in behalf of the welfare of her daughter, which grows into a mighty power. Before she wins the intervention of Christ for her daughter, she meets and overcomes all the major discouragements and obstacles which usually deter faith from obtaining the desired results. The inspiration and encouragement of the woman's courageous faith is the challenge of the Gospel lesson.

Faith is a missing virtue in many Christian lives. Some church people seem to think they can function as Christians without faith. There is no substitute for this all-important expression of Christian living. The person weighed in the balance, without faith, is found wanting. Much as people try to reach their destinations without exercising faith, they eventually discover that it is the only means of bridging the great chasms of life. Faith offers you the bridge to cover the distance between yourself and God and His way for your life. Heroes of the church march across the bridge called "Faith" in extending the kingdom of Christ.

Courageous faith is many times the outgrowth of a tragic health limitation. There is only one of two things to be done

when health problems seem to be surrounded by unsurmountable barriers. One way out is to despair. The other alternative is to believe that a cure may be found if a diligent search is made. The woman of Canaan portrays the faith that believed health was available for her daughter. Her description of the child was set forth in the words, "grievously vexed with a devil." Such a phrase stimulates the imagination to visualize total disability plus excessive distress. As disturbing as this health problem may appear, similar situations are common in the lives of many present-day families.

As we look over the world, we see many forms of health situations affecting the lives of children. Every summer we have infantile paralysis epidemics. They are so far-reaching in their contagion that parents are urged to keep their children away from public places where large crowds of people assemble. When the dreaded disease makes itself felt in the life of a child, it usually leaves its mark of partial or total physical deformity.

Among the other numerous children's ailments causing parental anxiety and deep concern is one which only recently has been given publicity. I refer to the children who from birth are known as "blue babies." The lack of a sufficient amount of oxygen in the bloodstream causes the bluish appearance of these handicapped children. Because of a malformation of an artery in the heart, the flow of blood to the lungs is greatly restricted. The proper content of oxygen is only possible when the blood flows unhampered into the lungs. Lack of oxygen seriously restricts the physical activity and shortens the lives of "blue babies" to a very limited time.

A courageous faith is adventuresome. Recently, our current magazines have related the great adventure of Doctors Alfred Blalock and Helen Taussig of Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, Maryland. These doctors since the beginning of 1945

have been performing operations on "blue babies" to restore them to approaching normal health. The operation consists of redirecting a portion of the blood stream. An artery carrying blood in the direction of the head and shoulders is severed and one end of the artery is sewed into an opening made in the cross artery, thus increasing the flow of blood to the lungs. The operation is designed to compensate for the lack of a sufficient quantity of blood reaching the lungs from its natural source. When a sufficient supply receives oxygen in the lungs, it changes the color of the former "blue baby" to a natural appearance. Now those who had faith to believe that medical science would come to the rescue have lived to experience a response. The operation is now perfected. Children all over the states are being rushed by automobile, train, and airplane to Baltimore to receive the blessing of this new delicate operation. Parents all over the world unceasingly thank God for doctors like these Johns Hopkins specialists and others like them who have won victories over children's diseases. How wonderful that God is using the knowledge and skill of doctors to restore health to the physically and mentally handicapped. I believe that our Lord is inspiring the medical profession in assisting Him to reward our faith.

The faith of the woman of Canaan was adventuresome in a day when there were no great physicians like those of our time. How to secure help for her daughter was her paramount thought. Why she did not lapse into despair as many other mothers, is the unanswered part of this Gospel-related incident. There are many forms of faith to which she might have resorted. For example, there is what has been characterized as a comfortable faith. This kind of faith would have allowed her to remain at home to care for her child. The action of such a faith might have given comfort to the mother in the thought that

there have always been sick children and always would be such children. The mother might have even considered the situation "the will of God," and have gone on to reflect that what God wanted could not be changed. Some parents may be satisfied to retreat into a comfortable faith, but thank God, our present-day doctors exercise a faith which encourages them to believe that many of the ailments of humanity can be corrected.

It is very fortunate for the daughter that her mother had an active, adventuresome faith. The need of the daughter was so desperate and the love of the mother so great that an overwhelming compulsion sent her out in search of help. All during the experience of seeking assistance, two characteristics of her courageous faith persisted. The one was that she never wavered from the impelling urge which activated her into the highways of the surrounding country in search of help for her daughter. The other was that the many obstacles and the severe testings only increased her zeal for reaching her goal.

The first adventuresome step was taken when she sought help beyond her own home and immediate community. The second step was taken in the direction of one whom she properly addressed by name, "O Lord, Thou son of David." If the woman of Canaan had a prejudice against the pure and unmixed children of David, that difference disappeared as she made the proper approach to lay claim to one who had power to heal. All barriers of race, color, and nationality are usually ignored by those seeking help for their loved ones. Publicly, she recognized Jesus for what He was — Son of God and Son of man. She made her request in an introductory manner, laying claim to His love and power in seeking His assistance for the solution of her problem. Her need was put in terms which had meaning for a merciful Saviour — "Have mercy upon me."

By his token she so identified herself with her daughter that she asked not that mercy be granted to her child, but to herself.

Jesus, in like manner, identified Himself with the people in the world that He might be able to lead them back to the Father. His identification with needy humanity involved the championing of their cause against the opposition of sin and death. This required that He go the way of the cross and death that He might prove Himself the victor over Satan and his soul-destroying influence on man. I'm sure we all thank God for the life-giving mission that He fulfilled and made available when He died and rose again for our salvation. In our lesson for today, the mother champions the cause for her daughter by her identification with her desperate need.

Where love exists, young people, like adults, identify themselves with members of the family to regain peace and happiness for the family group. The Bible injunction is many times carried out in family life: "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." When the limitations of this present world invade the family circle and threaten the health and future of any one member, the other Christian members of the family should begin to share in carrying the burdens until relief may be obtained.

Since the church is called into being by God and since the church is to operate as a family, all the members are to have a deep and abiding concern for the welfare of one another. As the church grows spiritually and becomes strong, she prepares herself to move into a wider sphere of influence.

The average person thought he would be happy again when V-E Day and V-J Day were proclaimed. These important days have come and gone. The longed-for peace, prosperity, and contentment have not followed as it was expected. The present distress in the world seems to be reaching staggering propor-

tions. One of the greatest needs is more food and clothing to help a needy world threatened with starvation and exposure. The common expression heard today is, "Times are more critical than they were during the war." The people of the world are grievously vexed from within and from without. Labor organizations are vexed, striking for higher wages and greater social security. Industrialists are vexed over restrictions and lack of new machinery. Building contractors are vexed because there is little or no material out of which to construct new homes. Home seekers are vexed because there are not enough homes and apartments available to be rented or purchased.

Who will intercede for this sin-sick world? The government has heard the cries of distress and has tried to do something about it by way of directives, priorities, restrictions, and subsidies. Although our government has made a genuine effort to improve the needy conditions of our country, conditions seem to grow worse rather than better. Probably, the reason the government and our twentieth-century civilization cannot effect a complete cure is because the vexation of humanity includes soul-sickness. If that is the case, only our Lord and His Church can exercise a deep enough concern to bring the patient — the sick world — to the Great Physician for healing and restored life.

A courageous faith is aggressive. The mother's goal of restored faith for her daughter was not reached in her first approach to Jesus. The mother's benefactor doubtless had a blessing in store for her that could not be granted on the basis of a first request. It was one of those gifts that is only available at the end of a petitioning process which reveals the true worth of the person.

Obstacles in the way turned back many a would-be soldier of the cross lacking faith. Of most people it may be said, "They

have faith but it is in experimental stages." Faith for most Christians has not been motivated by love of a child or by love of God or by love of needy humanity. Only faith aroused by such love is heroic enough to enter the arena of life to be tried and tested. We need a faith that has muscle in it and an accumulation of experience which urges it on in the face of difficulties and possible disappointments. The average person who thinks he possesses the virtue of Christian faith is only a school-boy in experience when compared with the heroes described in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews — "Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens."

Like the Old Testament saints, the woman of Canaan "waxed valiant in fight" — she moves past three obstacles. With these in the background, she makes her second approach to Jesus. It is simple and direct — "Lord, help me." It is in order now to further describe the three hindrances which she overcame. The nature of them may be visualized by these statements in the text: First, "but he answered her not a word." Second, "send her away; for she crieth after us." Third, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

The first test, "but he answered her not a word," was overcome by ignoring it to secure another opportunity to ask Jesus for help. The second obstacle, "send her away; for she crieth after us," might have frightened a casual seeker after a health blessing. The mother of one desperately handicapped, however, was not bothered by the would-be protectors of themselves and their Master's comfort. Jesus did not act upon the suggestion offered by His disciples. This test then was not a real obstacle

but may be likened to a smoke screen offered to protect Christ if He wanted relief from the woman's pleas for help. The third test might have been a pitfall to a person easily discouraged. The heroine of the incident did not represent a weak faith but one which may be likened to the Rock of Ages that could not be changed. The statement, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel," was received by the mother as mere information. A nonaggressive faith would have seen in the Master's statement a closed door to any further approaches. A faint heart never expresses itself in the form of courageous faith. In the pursuit of spiritual health, the pilgrim journeying toward the city of God does not consider a statement of fact to be the equivalent of a closed door.

Our representative of aggressive faith now makes her forceful request in three words — "Lord, help me." Jesus by this time sees in the petition a faith that is wagering its existence on Him as the Son of God with the power to heal. Up to this point, courageous faith, adventuresome faith, and aggressive faith have overcome all the preliminary obstacles. The most difficult testing is yet to be met and overcome. What can she do concerning Jesus' statement, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs"?

Courageous faith is resourceful. Many fields of knowledge are known to man. Large and small libraries all over the world record these known facts in the form of books. The portion of knowledge that is unknown challenges the resourcefulness of our greatest scientists, theologians, and scholars. In all fields of exploration and research, established facts and information serve as the basis of proceeding further into the field of the unknown. Any progress made beyond the known requires new and daring resourcefulness. In America, the pioneer lived in an environment offering him no rules and regulations by which

he could proceed to solve his problem. The Boy Scouts of America as a youth organization has built its program on the idea of providing situations in which the boy may learn to be resourceful. American industry has gained the reputation of resourcefulness in fast conversion from peacetime production to war emergency production and back again. Resourcefulness is given the credit for being a highly desirable characteristic of the American people.

In the realm of religion, we may not have been so resourceful. Yet there has been something in the Christian religion which has helped it outlive all the changes of civilization to date. No movement or institution has made an adjustment to the changes of the ages so effectively as has the Christian Church. Probably our most serious testing is at hand. It is still an open question whether we are going to show ourselves resourceful enough in this atomic age. Can we help the nations of the world to use this new power for benevolent purposes?

The champion of a resourceful faith meets the final test by the power of truth. Jesus has said, "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." His statement to the woman was, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs." She agreed with her Lord and said, "Truth, Lord" — and then to show her appreciation of His great power to heal she continued, "Yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." Who, before this woman's time, had ever recognized that the crumbs of salvation were powerful enough to meet the requests of the needy? She saw in what was left over or wasted a sufficient blessing to provide health for her daughter. What powers, what blessings, can be kept from becoming the possession of one who has such resourceful faith? All the doors of opportunity swing wide open for such believing humility to enter. On a similar occasion of

great faith exercised by the centurion, Jesus said, "I have not seen so great faith, no, not in all Israel." The faith of the mother had met all the tests to which it had been subjected. The pure, deep love for her daughter had been revealed. It was like unto the love that the Lord of life has for us. What could Jesus say other than "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt"? The dramatic conclusion of this spiritually invigorating incident is just as seasoned Christians would expect. It is "and her daughter was made whole from that very hour."

In this incident we have seen Christian faith make steady progress toward the desired goal. All obstacles and hindrances were overcome. Divine intervention, the goal of faith, was the treasured reward. Jesus was and still is the champion of those who come to Him in faith believing that He has the power to heal and bless.

We wish that the Bible narrative did not end so abruptly. You too, doubtless, wish we could read what good was accomplished by the daughter and mother freed from sickness and anxiety. We wonder how these two redeemed children of God expressed their appreciation of faith rewarded. Do you think the mother returned to her home only to lose herself in the performance of her routine household duties? Can you imagine the daughter growing up without a sense of an eternal thank-you for the divine intervention which made possible her new and second birthday? I cannot visualize either of these two greatly blessed people being lights withheld from a dark and distressed world.

Although the mother had no material possession with which to reward Christ for the blessings bestowed, a way of showing gratitude was open to her and her restored daughter. It was the Kingdom way — "the gift of life received calls for the gift

of life returned in service to Christ and His cause." By this token the strength of Christ's Church is measured. People who have received new life from the Saviour and in return have devoted it to Him are the ones who have extended and are extending His kingdom.

Courageous faith is the fruit of a deep and abiding love — a deep concern for the total welfare of our fellow-men. The reward of faith comes in the form of Christ's intervention for the purpose of providing a new and better way of life. Appreciation is a sense of responsibility expressed by the redeemed in a life of service dedicated to Christ, the Lord. God grant that you, the member of the church, may exercise a courageous faith and may experience the joy of its reward. Amen.

Oulu

THE HOUND OF HEAVEN

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Oculi

Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. . . . How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand; when I awake, I am still with thee. . . . Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

*Psalms 139:7-10,
17, 18, 23, 24*

THE HOUND OF HEAVEN

Psalm 139:7ff

Have you ever seen a man run away from God? The writer of this psalm describes the experience. He declares that no matter where a man might flee, God is there, close beside him. He may go up into the sky or down into the earth. He may cross the seas and travel in distant lands. Or he may try to hide under cover of darkness. Anywhere he might go the discovery is the same; God is there; he cannot be evaded. And what is more, God is there to capture, to save, and to lead "into the way everlasting."

The message of this passage is that when fleeing man turns and surrenders to the pursuing God, the person enters into eternal life.

To flee from God is a universal urge. All men try to do so. It is the inclination of sinners and "saints." Adam, when he disobeyed, tried to hide in the garden. Cain, after he killed Abel, became "a fugitive and a vagabond upon the earth." Judas, having betrayed his Master, committed suicide. Long before psychology spoke of "escapisms," men were using them.

Attempted evasion of God is not out of fashion. People still try to avoid Him today. Some seek escape through liquor or drugs; others, by frequenting the movies. Some try to find refuge in hard work; others, in fault-finding. A few go into tantrums, reverting to a pattern of childhood behavior. Some,

rather than face reality, imagine that they are physically ill, and often convince others and themselves that the illness is real. In a multitude of ways people try to avoid facing God and themselves.

Not only sinners but the so-called righteous try to evade God. We people of the churches say we believe in the Bible, in prayer, in public worship, but is it not true that we try to get along without them, as much as our consciences will permit? When the time of day comes for our private devotions, we say to ourselves, "All right. It's time now. Open the Bible; read the portion of suggested Scripture; let your thoughts dwell upon it; let God speak to you." But another voice says, "No, not this time. We are very busy today. We must get on with our work. Tomorrow — then we may do it." Too often this second voice convinces us, and we fail to meet God.

Or take the common Sunday morning experience of the average church member. He awakes and arouses himself. He remembers that it is the Sabbath day. There is an urge within him to get up, get dressed, have his breakfast, and go to church. But there is another urge which argues: "To go to church is commendable but there are other ways in which to use this morning. You need rest. You haven't felt too well lately. A morning at home would do you a world of good. After all, we must take care of ourselves. Then, too, there are things to be done around the house. This is the chance you have been waiting for for some time. Anyway, they won't miss you at church today." Sometimes the one impulse wins and we are glad, for we meet God again. At other times the other urge prevails and we stay home. Whatever God has to say to us that morning may never be heard by us. We have evaded Him.

The tendency to evade God is subtle. We may seek to hide

from him by actually going through the formality of worship. Both public and private worship may be practiced self-righteously, not for the sake of meeting God but to quiet conscience, to anesthetize one's better self. There are persons who regularly go through the formalities of worship who still dodge the implications of the Christian faith. Think of the situation in Moscow, prior to the Bolshevik revolution. The masses were suffering from great social evils. They were shackled by class distinctions and oppressed by grinding poverty. Their dissatisfaction was nearing the point of explosion. The leaders of the Church might have been in the forefront of the movement for social justice. Instead, we are told, they continued to debate the fine points of liturgical practice. They wanted to be sure to use the correct vestments at the correct times! Ritual, you see, may be a magic carpet, carrying the worshiper into the presence of God. Or it may become a cloak behind which to hide. The urge of man to evade God is so great that he turns even good means into avenues of escape.

In "The Hound of Heaven" Francis Thompson describes this universal urge in these words:

"I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him down the arches of the years;
I fled Him down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the midst of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter. . . ."

Men flee from God.

Fortunately, however, our Heavenly Father does not leave us to our own devices. He pursues us, hoping ever to win us. Francis Thompson expresses the thought of God "hounding" him as he continues his poem:

"... Up vistaed hopes I sped;
And shot, precipitated,
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmed fears,
From those strong Feet that followed, followed after."

Those strong Feet do follow, follow after.

"If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there." (For the psalmist that statement was speculation; for us it is demonstrable fact. One aviator speaks of God as his "co-pilot.") "If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there. If I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I . . . dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me!" We cannot get away from Him.

God seeks men! He is revealed in Jesus Christ as One who is like a shepherd seeking *all* his sheep. He is like a woman searching diligently for a lost jewel. He is like a devoted father watching for his son's return. He is the One who stands at the door and knocks. And while He knocks He declares: "If any man will open the door, I will come in unto him, and sup with him, and he with me."

He comes to us in the love of our parents. He lays His hand upon us in the sacrament of baptism. He speaks to us through our pastor and our teachers. We find Him in our services of worship in the Word sung and in the Word proclaimed. His presence is in the Lord's Supper and in the quiet periods spent in communion with His Spirit. When tragedy strikes closely, or when His gift of a little child is granted to the home circle, in sorrow and in joy, His hand is upon us and His voice is heard by us.

This is the Gospel! Though man may run away from God, God resolutely pursues him. "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Amazing love! Blessed news! He never forsakes us! Relentlessly He follows after!

Yet this fearful word must be added: Man is not forced to surrender to God. The person still holds the key to the inner door. If he wills, he may continue to shut out the Light.

And if he chooses to shut out the Light, then what? To-day's Epistle lesson warns that such a one has no "inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." The man who shuts God out chooses the way of eternal death.

But for the man who stops, turns, lets God overtake him — and lets God take him over, body, mind, and soul? For that man there is eternal life.

First are experienced wonder and gratitude. In the words of the psalmist: "How precious are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!"

Secondly, there is repentance. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me."

Finally, there is surrender. It is as though the believer says, "Lord, I have been running away from you long enough. 'I cannot by my own reason or strength' find the way to what I really want. You lead me. Lead me in the way everlasting."

Today is called "Oculi." It is the day in which, in ancient times, the catechumens were called upon to reject the devil and decide fully for God. The Gospel lesson reminded them that a house divided against itself could not stand. They could not flee from God at the same time be loyal to Him. They were either for Him or against Him.

So we today are called upon to repent of those attitudes and acts by which we have denied the Lord. Then we are to receive His assurance of forgiveness, and, out of gratitude for His grace, surrender ourselves to Him. Then, we may be confident, He will lead us into the way everlasting.

One day, immediately following the First World War, a

pastor was called to a certain hospital to help a desperate young woman. She was not a member of his congregation; in fact, she was a stranger to him. She proved to be about thirty years of age, married, and of good parentage. Between sobs she told her story. Until the war she was a fairly normal person. After a few months of married life her husband was drafted and later was sent overseas. They were separated for two years. In the meantime she threw herself into war work and lived for the day when she could again have the companionship of her husband and fulfill her desire for a family. With the end of the war and the return of her husband it seemed that both her hopes were to be satisfied. Her first disappointment came in the employment which her husband secured. His job was to take him away from home five days out of every week. Living in a three-room apartment and with no particular responsibility, time hung heavily upon her hands. Her greatest disappointment, however, was to be in her failure to have a family. Four different times she had promise of motherhood, only to lose the babies prematurely. Her disappointment was great, but it became unbearable when it appeared that there was no hope of their ever having a family. Almost simultaneously her husband announced that his firm was offering him a special course of training which would take him away to school for five months. He had decided to accept the offer. The blow was too great for her. Instead of facing the situation and making the best of it, she turned to drink. Here was a simple and available method of getting away from her troubles. Her faith and Christian life now entered an eclipse. One drunken orgy followed another. Her friends told her to pull herself together. Her parents pleaded with her. Her husband threatened to leave her. She tried an alcoholic cure. She was psychoanalyzed. She joined a society of cured alcoholics. Noth-

ing helped. The climax came when in a drunken stupor she set her bed afire by a lighted cigarette and she was barely rescued from burning to death. She awoke in the hospital. The burns were deep. Her nerves were gone. Remorse and despair now settled upon her. A nurse suggested calling the pastor. The patient was ready for spiritual help.

After one or two visits, the pastor advised her to follow the advice of her physician and have any physical ailments cleared up as soon as possible. She was also to get the help of a Christian psychiatrist, if that seemed necessary. Above all, she and her husband were to make themselves right with God. Repentance for and confession of sin were to be made. Trust in the Lord's assurances of forgiveness was to be felt, and surrender of their wills to His was to follow. The fellowship of a Christian congregation was to be sought.

The young couple willingly took each step. They expressed repentance for their sins. They expressed faith in God's readiness to forgive, and they surrendered themselves to Him. They became active members of a local congregation and found strength in the fellowship of worship and service. The husband took employment which would permit him to be at home every evening. In the course of a year or two their first baby arrived, normally healthy. Only once again did the woman slip back into alcoholism. That episode served to throw her more than ever onto the strength of the Lord. Never again did she fail. For years now the parents and children have been blessed with happiness. Their home and church life is another sign of the saving grace of God.

While they fled from Him there was nothing for them but defeat. When they turned to Him they found salvation.

We are defeated at various times, in one way or another. But we need not remain defeated. The pursuing God offers us

freely forgiveness of our sins through faith in Jesus Christ. He makes available for us the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. If we will, we may be "more than conquerors through Him who loved us." When we stop fleeing, and turn, surrendering to this gracious God, He leads us "into the way everlasting."

Laetare

FROM TYRANNY TO FREEDOM

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Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.

Colossians 1:12. 13

FROM TYRANNY TO FREEDOM

Colossians 1:12, 13

Paul is always writing of the age-old struggle from tyranny into freedom. That's what concerns him in this lesson. His own people, the Jews, with their Law that came by Moses, have found no escape. The "Jerusalem which now is, is in bondage with her children." Here in Colossians he strikes the same tone again; but it's rounder and fuller now, with all the overtones of the Christian gospel in it. The figures of speech are all gone. No Sinai, no Agar, no children of the bondwoman or of the free. Straightly and simply he says it: God has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son. Here is a struggle at some deeper level than any on which we have ever been engaged. If it's a fact, it's a fact with which we have to reckon!

I want you to look at two of those words with particular care, right here at the start. *Delivered* is one of them. It doesn't mean an effortless act, like the act of creation in the first verse of the Bible. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." That didn't cause Him any great straining of His muscles. A thought did it, the flash of a will. This bent His back and made the sweat come. It was like a heavy weight dragged along by digging your toes in the sand and tugging with all your might: who hath *delivered* us from the power of darkness, and hath *translated* us . . .

That's the other word. Originally it meant just a change of place. You were over there, shall we say in a dungeon, with iron chains on your hands and feet; but not any longer. Some vast disengagement has been wrought; and you're over here now, a free man, breathing the air of heaven. I've never been able to think of it though without remembering the days when with no little agony of mind and great travail of soul I would be set the task of "doing over" one language into another, whole pages at a time; as if all we *used to be* were like one of those pages written in Greek, and God Himself had been set the task of doing it over into Latin! Who hath translated us — German into English, French into Italian, Chinese into Spanish — something like that: from the power of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son.

I. Suppose we begin then by saying that obviously *God* has done something, according to Paul, which has reshaped the whole course of human life and human history: something to get it clear of that dark dominion which forever wants to make slaves of us. I suppose we have had some first-hand experience of what he's talking about, but I'm not sure we understand what an appalling thing it is. The New Testament calls it the dominion of the devil. I don't know any other phrase that can be stretched far enough to take it all in. The blindness and the hatred and the misery that keep running amok in the world are manifest enough to anybody who will look. What isn't so manifest, and what has to be if we are to make any headway at all, is the fact that the blindness and the hatred and the misery have their seat not merely in certain specific acts of the will, but in "a deep defect," a kind of "ineradicable self-love."

That's why it's always *our* judgments that seem objective and unimpeachable. It is we who are getting at the truth. Not the other fellow. In theory we are not above reproach; but in

fact we aren't violently concerned about being any different! We are sure God will have mercy on us; but *we* shall be the judge of those who look to us for some. Every time I turn around I am asked why we have wars, why the church is so weak, why Christians are so no-account, why that person over there is so obstreperous and this person over here so obnoxious.

Why don't we sit down, have it out with ourselves for five minutes, and solve all our own riddles? It's because we aren't pretty, any of us: least so when we think we're most! You remember the little boy who was playing so very quietly upstairs that his mother was certain something was wrong; so she went to the foot of the steps, wiping her hands on her apron, and called out, "Harry! Harry! Whatever it is you're doing, stop it, and behave yourself!" She at least had an inkling of the stuff we're made of! Most of our difficulties in the world, and in religion as well, come of forgetting: falling down on our knees in church every Sunday to say that we are by nature sinful and unclean; then stumbling to our feet as if we had got rid of something by confessing it!

We just never measure the state of affairs inside of us with any decent yardstick. We have been taught not to be the very civilization of which we are a part. It continually assumes with the certainty of a dogma that everything will be all right if people will just quit fooling around with religion and do something constructive. Christianity is a fiction, a fable, a fantasy, "abhorrent to the inquiring mind of an average child." So it runs in a recent book on education. And people swallow it soberly as if nothing were the matter with them inside that a few years in high school wouldn't correct. Why can't they ever see reflected there in the world their own desperate need?

With my eyes steadily on *mine*, and no wool over them, you can't persuade *me* that God is a luxury and religion nothing

but "make-believe," a "vapor of superstition." There's something inside that nothing else can handle; something — so another has put it — that throws light as nothing else does on those "complex factors in human behavior which constantly escape" the educator and the moralist. A lad in the service wrote me some time ago of a discovery he had made. He had found out that a good many "good" people weren't Christians at all; so that this business about Jesus Christ, who He was and what He did, seemed to make no difference whatsoever. We were fighting a war, weren't we? To thunder with Christianity if that's all it could do!

The only trouble with him was that he had no adequate definition of what *good* means; because in his own life he had never seen to the bottom of what *bad* means! It isn't Christianity that does these things: *we* do them. They don't spring from "the failure of philosophy and religion to furnish a body of right belief or a code of right action which could command the assent and the obedience of the modern world." That's what an eminent jurist wanted us to believe when he saw these catastrophes coming. Rather did they spring from his own failure, and thousands like it, as we all kept looking around for a scapegoat, instead of standing in front of a mirror and staring a while at what we could find there!

There *is* a dominion. And it's dark. And it's deep. And it's going to cancel right now — while they are still in the cradle! — most of your dreams and mine about tomorrow. The plans we make and the hopes we have are up against it. And nobody breaks it easily. Not even God Almighty! "That's just what makes me wretched," groans Dmitri, in Dostoevski's *The Brothers Karamazov*. "All my life I have yearned to be honorable; and all my life I have been doing filthy things." Paul knew. "The good that I would . . . The evil that I would not . . ."

II. Very well then. Why on earth does he talk about being delivered, translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son? He's a little previous, isn't he? He must be thinking of some happy day on the other side of history, a place beyond the sky, where everything at last will be as it ought to be. Only he isn't! He's thinking about a kingdom that's a kingdom *now*.

It's a kingdom of judgment first of all. I suppose that's more apparent at the moment than anything else about it. James Reid, of Eastbourne, used to say: "If you really want to know who it is that's in charge of things, look at what happens in the world when *we* try to take over!" Was this something of what Jesus meant that last night of His life when He said, "The prince of this world is judged"? That dark dominion was already under the condemnation of a court which was able to execute its verdict! You would hardly think so, with this little handful of men, and those muttering crowds, the marching soldiers and Pilate, the purple robe; but it was true. God did execute that verdict! He still does. See for yourself what becomes of injustice and prejudice — the kind we cherish and keep on cherishing as if it didn't matter; of jealousy and vengeance; of the contempt we have for most of the people who won't look like us or act like us or think as we do! See what becomes of that.

Then tell me that the kingdom of God's dear Son is somewhere else! Karl Barth talks about its being on the edge of history, with all of us tugging toward it. It's in the middle! It isn't coming some time: it's come! No use singing about it forever and begging it to put in an appearance. There used to be a gospel hymn when I was a boy that had a chorus which kept saying, "Hold the fort, for I am coming." I got so tired of holding that fort! I sang about it among very so-called low-church friends and looked around; but nobody came. The next

Sunday I looked around among the high-church folk, thinking that God perhaps might prefer the somewhat more classical traditions of their church music; but nobody came. And for a very simple reason: God was there to begin with! His kingdom is like the law of gravity: the things that stand, stand on it; the things that fall, fall because of it. All there is to pray about or sing about or "bring in" is people: people who won't keep on stubbing their toes over it, or falling flat on their faces; but will start building. "The kingdom of God is within you." Let me see you sneak out from under!

But it's a kingdom of mercy too; and that's just as obvious. Whenever anybody wants to avail himself of it things actually begin to happen. In 1905 Albert Schweitzer gave up his post as principal of the Theological College of St. Thomas' to enter a medical school. He wanted to become what he called a "jungle doctor," and go off to the wilds of Africa. The dean of the medical faculty thought Schweitzer had better turn himself right over to the psychiatric department! Nobody seemed to understand. They had all read that the love preached by Jesus might conceivably sweep a man into a new course of life. They had read that in the New Testament. And there it seemed quite in order. But this act of obedience on Schweitzer's part probably sprang from conceit. That's what they said. They just didn't get it. Something was behind it. Maybe he was disappointed in love. Maybe he was frustrated, because his reputation hadn't been growing rapidly enough. He was a precocious young fellow, but not quite right in his head! So began one of the modern sagas of the kingdom of God. Do you still think that kingdom is somewhere else?

I seem to hear you say that no such creative making over of your life is possible. More than one person has told me, for instance, that he feels thus or so toward some other race

or nation, and he can't help it. If some of us don't help it soon, we have nothing to complain about when the powder keg we're sitting on in the world goes off again with a considerably greater bang! Can't help it nothing! We don't *want* to help it! And the things we say. And the things we do. And what we don't do. We can help it whenever we like! We don't have to be what we have been, unless it suits our books to go on. We can't be perfect; but nobody's advocating perfection yet, not by a long shot! We can at least say the word and swap masters! That isn't what has recently been called an impossible possibility; not at all: it's a very *possible* impossibility! You can't get rid of your human nature; but you can get rid of the bondage that wants to make a slave out of you at every drop of the hat. When you stumble, you stumble; but you won't lie down! The taste of evil will be on your lips as long as you live; but the light of all God's heaven can begin to shine out of your eyes! It did out of Paul's. I saw a hundred and fifty Germans, Italians, Spaniards, Norwegians, stand up in a courtroom one day. The judge told each of them to raise his right hand; and there while the chills raced up and down my spine they solemnly renounced their loyalty to the land of their birth, and with equal solemnity swore allegiance to the Stars and Stripes! That's it!

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!" I'm *His man*! To keep insisting that no such thing will do any good in this workaday human society of ours is simply to be absurd. Have you ever read what Bishop Azariah, one of India's untouchables, said once about his own people: how they had been lifted by the Christian gospel into knowledge and culture and self-respect; what it had done for their womanhood; how clean things were where there had been nothing but dirt; how happy their children, where nothing had ever been known

but fear? And they tell us that the kingdom of God is away off outside of history. Listen to me: What's away off outside of history is the will to have any of it here! You take care of that, and God will take care of His kingdom! He's done it often. When the Hebrew people were captive in Babylon. When the barbarians sacked the Roman Empire. When in the Reformation the very Church of God herself was split wide open. You can be a pessimist in your thinking about man. You had better be, if you know what's good for you! *I am!* A generous dash of pessimism about myself even doesn't do me any harm! But you can be an incurable optimist about your faith in God! When we struggle along to relieve human poverty and establish human justice and outlaw war, one great theologian has said that we are biting on granite. Maybe we are; but God isn't! My stock isn't in what *we* do; I have taken out my stock in what *He* does when any one of us will give Him half a chance.

III. "Who hath delivered us into the kingdom of his dear Son." It's the deed of God which has already been done in Jesus of Nazareth! Never talk of the Christian gospel when you've quit talking about Him. He isn't central to it. He's the whole story. All the rest that the apostle Paul says (Col. 1:10-12) about being fruitful in every good work, about being strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, about giving thanks to the Father with joyfulness — none of it is anything but a kind of sequel. God's deed went before it. Always in the gospel there is that Christ; and where He moves, this tremendous striking off of shackles, this huge reversal, this terrific pull at something to turn it inside out! The Old Testament keeps whispering about it and pointing. The New Testament shouts about it, with both hands full. The Christian religion has no other object.

And I don't quite see how we can expect, at this late date, to have any very satisfying experience of Christianity if we aim at anything else. It's intended to dig you out of where you were and to set you over where God wants you. Not to make rough roads smooth, or hard jobs easy, or wrong choices right. Not to ward off calamity or to bring back prosperity. It will never place within your grasp the power that controls the future, or switch that power over from hostility to friendliness. If that's what you're trying to do when you pray: trying to unravel your complexes, while you keep tying them tighter yourself all the time; trying to wheedle or cajole or persuade or manipulate or manage — don't! Or you'll be behaving one of these days like the village priest who cursed his idol and tore off its beard, because it let a fire break out in the temple; but the common people, more kindly than the priest, forgave it, and brought it back, and got it another beard, and provided it with a brand-new pair of wives. You cannot work God, or exploit Eternity. Religion doesn't make Him over after you! It is that or nothing!

It makes you over by bringing you face to face — with what? Not with the example of this carpenter out of Galilee. Millions of people in the world are willing to take off their hat to that. A good many Christians even spend most of their time saluting it! One of the tragedies of our generation is that there are thousands of Christian pulpits doing nothing else from Sunday to Sunday, year in and year out. Christianity brings you face to face with Jesus. His teaching wasn't new, not too much of it — He was. What we have in the Christian religion that isn't anywhere else is Christ. And the cross that stands there as the central mystery of his life: where He was defeated, and where He triumphed! Make no mistake: The story of His crucifixion isn't the story of a man who died for his enemies.

I have heard that said. There is no such statement in the Revised Version, none in Moffatt, none in Weymouth or Goodspeed. Someone had to make it up. If you want to say it you have to make it up. Certainly there was no such statement back there in that first century when this apostle wrote. If there had been, it would never have got out!

There's a God here who has done a costly deed: bearing on two rough beams of wood what only He can bear; carrying there in the days of Pontius Pilate, and through all of human history, what we can't; sharing with us the worst, and still showing us the best; saying with every tired muscle of His hurt body that we can have it whenever we like, as much of it as we will. And no one who has ever been within sight of that place can rest any more! Studdert Kennedy was there:

I bet my life

Upon one side in life's great war. I must.

I can't stand out. I must take sides. The man

Who is a neutral in this fight is not

A man. He's bulk and body without breath.

I want to live, live out, not wobble through

My life somehow, and then into the dark.

I must have God. This life's too dull without,

Too dull for aught but suicide.

I can't stand shivering on the brink. I plunge

Head first.

Let us pray. We give Thee thanks, O God, that Thou hast made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, hast delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of Thy dear Son. Fill us now with the knowledge of His will; and strengthen us with all might, according to His glorious power. Amen.

Judica

THE PURGING POWER OF HIS PASSION

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Judica

For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Hebrews 9:13-14

THE PURGING POWER OF HIS PASSION

Hebrews 9:13-14

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews is setting before us the Mediator of the new covenant. The vital part which we most often miss he sets forth as the purpose and fruits of His Passion. By "Passion" we mean the imposed pain, distress, suffering, and death of Jesus. The word "purge" as used in the Bible means to refine, to purify, to cleanse, to cast out or clear away, to pour down or cleanse from above, to be covered or pardoned. Jesus' passion is no stage act to be admired or to draw forth in us a pity for Him, but to purge, purify, and pardon sinful life and bring it into a living, life-giving relationship with God.

Every person on earth, from the slum dwellers to the world's great leaders, must be continually and persistently confronted with the righteousness, justice, love, and mercy of God. God has done this perfectly in the Passion of His Son. That is God's real beginning for us and not the end. He must continue to confront men with His righteousness, justice, and love through redeemed men. Never has it been so urgent to do this as now. The starting place for us is humility and penitence before God. One with his eyes open can find reason for no other attitude. But that is only a starting place.

His Passion is no Appeal for Our Pity

Whatever else His Passion is, it's not God's effort to secure

our sympathy and pity for Him or His Son. He wants neither of these, and man needs neither. Who can imagine God rejoicing in a believer's enjoying a good cry about Him? His Passion belongs to His greatness, and plays a large part in all real greatness. So is it majestic, powerful, purging, purifying, redeeming, and challenging.

We have often done great injustice to Him and hindered His appeal to men by the way we have presented Him in His sufferings. "The poor Babe with no place to be born but a stable," "the poverty-stricken Jesus, with no place to lay His head," "the helpless victim, mistreated, misjudged, tortured and killed by cruel men," "standing outside the door knocking, but helpless until man decides to open the door to Him." These are facts concerning Him and His life, but they do not give us a correct picture of Jesus Christ. This helpless babe and poverty-stricken Jesus is the divine Son of God and the owner of the whole world. This helpless victim and pleading Saviour has all the power of heaven at His disposal and has triumphed in the only real sense of triumph. He will always win and no one can defeat Him. All things will be subject to Him, for He will reign until all things are put under His feet. "At His name every knee shall bow and tongue confess." He wants no sentimental slush in the appeal He asks us to make for Him. When we make a sentimental appeal to arouse man's compassion for Christ we are trying to go forward in reverse. This actually hinders His appeal to man.

His Passion is the Offer of God's Purging Power for Life

Jesus' Passion cannot mean anything to me or to any man until, through the work of the Holy Spirit, we come to see "He did this for me." It is God's offering us all He has to meet our need. We must see His Passion as triumph through Christ

for life, all life, that must begin with the cleansing and purging of my own sinful self. For us to dwell on His Passion without always seeing this in the light of the Risen Christ is to completely miss the mark. We need to experience anew just what that defeated group of apostles did with the triumphant, living Christ. This will take some "aloneness" with God. Only the type of experience that gets man alone with God affords any purging power. Many are the times we seek fellowship with a crowd to satisfy what, if we could but see it, is God pulling at the heartstrings.

The real appeal of His Passion comes much closer to life than just the appeal of a noble, unselfish act done for someone in need. It comes this close: He rescued me from death and destruction and gives to me not only my life, but the life that is full, joyful, meaningful, victorious, and satisfying. How would you feel toward the man who risked his life to rescue you from a burning building? Surely not a feeling of pity for him would be the answer. There would be gratitude, love, and a desire to put those emotions into action. Nothing, no power, will purge, lift, and cleanse a sinful life like being surrounded by lives in whom this spirit of Christ is working. How can any man think his life does not count when he can play this part in living?

Jesus Christ is Life's Only Reality

He is not only the reality symbolized in all Old Testament sacrifices, but He is also *the Life* around which everything must center if it is to make any real contribution to living. What the living germ in the egg does in organizing the material of the egg into life, Jesus does for the things of life. Even the blood of animals sprinkled on impure flesh served to the purification of the flesh. We don't understand how that was possible. But we must remember that it was more than man's act. It was

man's act in obedience to God, and the fellowship and communion with God that counted. Whatever God has devised as a means of blessing life has always been efficacious. There has never been any repeal of that truth. Then, that being true, reasons the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God?" The experience of the ages, and our own, verify this fact. The starting place is seeing in Christ's Passion what God has done for me. That includes the worst sinner who has lived. Where sin abounds, grace abounds more. Without a consciousness of our sin and guilt no man can accept, appreciate, or love Jesus Christ. When we know Him in this way we marvel at His goodness and blessings and grow toward Him. All effort to serve Him is dead works until He has purged us of sin and selfishness.

There hangs a pathetic picture of so many lives. Faithful and loyal workers to whom it has all become drudgery. Here is the purging that the Church has not persistently confronted her members with, and, until that is done, the Church members cannot confront the world with His purging power. Our most dangerous, most devastating foe is not war, nor the danger of complete destruction by the atom bomb. It is uncleansed, unpurged guilty consciences. That is the root of it. When Christ reaches into a man's heart and transforms it, then that man will seek to use everything that comes into his hands to bless life. This purging power lies in Jesus Christ alone. No trick of the mind, no merit of good works, no self-inflicted punishment can cleanse any guilty soul.

There is another side besides being saved. Nothing God imparts to me is for me alone. My life must be at His disposal or it does not even belong to Him. No man can belong to

Him and not want others to know Him too. There is no dead works about a life that loves Christ out of gratitude for His saving presence. If any person reading this message has never allowed Jesus to verify His promises to him, my appeal is that you confront yourself with Him. He has revealed Himself. The record is plain. To all who have been dabbling in dead works, trying by forced effort to serve Him, I make this appeal: Remember that Jesus Himself, and not what Jesus can give you, is God's greatest gift to you. For Jesus can't give you His blessings until He lives in you.

Palmarum

THE KING AND HIS KINGDOM

PAUL M. KINPORTS, D.D.

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Palmarum

But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus. On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna! Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord. And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt. These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him.

John 12:10-16

THE KING AND HIS KINGDOM

John 12:10-16

The King at last is come into His own. The week of the Passover has become Coronation week. Though crowned at last with thorns, though the cross became His throne, this was His time of triumph. Though it ended in pain and death, it was the conqueror's pain and hero's death. As a commander gives his life, leads his troops into battle, and by his daring saves the day for his country and wins undying fame, so did the captain of our salvation ride through the greatest week of history.

Follow the people and their pathway of palms over which they led Him so joyously that spring morning. The palm branch was the banner of the poor, the insignia of the people. As such Jesus welcomed it. He had sprung from the people. Like Moses born in slavery, made a prince in Egypt and Israel; like David, lifted from the sheepfold to the conqueror's throne; like Luther, the miner's son, reforming kings and princes; like Lincoln, rising from poverty to power; so Jesus, now triumphant, had shared the lot of the common man. He was indeed one of the people in their poverty; for we read, "He had not where to lay His head." For months and years, we read, the common people heard Him gladly. Hear the text of a sermon He preached on that first Sabbath in Nazareth, "He hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor."

Now comes the climax of the love of those for whom He came, and they voice their enthusiasm and devotion. Thus into His capital city rode Jesus! Sinners forgiven, lepers cleansed, lame and sick made whole; all along the highway from Bethany to Jerusalem they crowd and shout, singing as a mighty choir. Thus the chanting in the advance met the response in the rear. "Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord!"

When we think of the word "king" as it has been applied to Christ since that day, it has a far greater meaning and one which we cannot ignore. Christ is not only our Saviour, our Shepherd, our Light, our Hope, our Prophet, but he is also our King. He would not only save us, lead us, encourage us, and teach us — He would also rule us. We are to be subject unto Him, we are to obey Him, we are to serve Him.

As King, Christ fulfilled the promises of God. The Palm Sunday crowd misunderstood those promises. They thought of God's blessing in terms of their physical well-being. The hope of material prosperity, of national power, of the return of the Davidic empire and the Solomonic splendor that had burned in the hearts of the Hebrew patriots since the decadence of the nation's greatness, had no place in the kingdom which Jesus came to establish.

The kingdom of Jesus was to be a kingdom that would change the world, not by the return of Jewish ascendancy, but by changing men into citizens of a spiritual commonwealth. It was to come not by force of conquest, but by the power of God acting upon the lives of men; not by the overthrow of the autocracy of Rome, but by the regeneration of human souls.

We and the people on the way to Jerusalem have a common problem; man wants to save his life, not lose it. But as the will grows in strength and as desire becomes powerful, the

will divides and struggles against itself. The will of man is torn in two. But listen to these words of our Lord: "My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence." Jesus was thinking not in spatial but in spiritual terms. He meant that His kingdom is not founded on the principles of this world and it will not use the policies of this world for its propagation and protection. It is therefore the mission of the Church to proclaim and reflect this kingdom.

Wise men are now conferring in search of a way to change the world. For years we have been wandering disillusioned through the valley of disenchantment. The fair follies through which men hoped to redeem humanity have one after another betrayed their own futility.

How large grows the scrap heap of abandoned hopes! The doctrine of godless automatic progress lies buried on the battlefields of Europe and Asia. The desperate solution of salvation through social and industrial revolution, redemption by materialistic philosophy, reveals its fallacy. The dominion of force has shattered the scepter on a stubborn world which it could bankrupt but not destroy.

Wise men of the world gather asking in all seriousness where the power is to be discovered that will save civilization in which has been invested heroic sacrifice and consecrated service. We face the challenge and the opportunity in the growing consciousness that redemption, not revision or reform, is the way to normalcy.

There is one Gospel, the Gospel of Christ. It proclaims the King with His power to save a human soul and through saved men to save the world. Battles, tariffs, laws, systems of government, cannot establish this kingdom of grace and truth.

Such must come by the way of the cross and regeneration in individual lives. That it is a slow process must be admitted. Jesus Himself taught that it would be when He likened the kingdom to a seed. Yet there is life in a seed, and, given the necessary conditions, it will grow and bring forth fruit.

Sometimes the outlook for Christ's kingdom of truth and love and peace does not appear so hopeful. The forces of darkness gather themselves together to oppose the King of truth. Perhaps much of the hostility toward the King and His kingdom of truth and love is due to the fact that so many professing citizens of the heavenly kingdom have been unfaithful ambassadors.

A discouraged world, conscious of its failures and follies, realizing the imperative need for a change which it is rapidly becoming convinced must be accomplished through spiritual healing — such a world presents the greatest opportunity that has confronted the followers of King Jesus and His kingdom since the days of the Reformation to declare the evangel of the kingdom of our Lord.

Are we listening to the voice of greed and selfishness? Are we hearkening to the voice of the unfair criticism of Christ and of the Bible and of the Church? Are we giving ear to those who urge the expedient rather than the excellent? If we pay attention to this babel of voices, we will find that the Master's voice is drowned out by the static of those strident voices that are of earth earthy.

As King, Christ will rule forever. He is more than a king for a day. He is King for aye. Of His kingdom there shall be no end. "The kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our God and His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever." This King shall be the judge of His kingdom. "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, 'Come,

ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' " This King is God in the person of Jesus Christ, He who once was man and rode into the city of Jerusalem in triumph. He who knows what is in man, He whose sole concern it ever was that right shall win. He shall be the world's final judge. A good judge is the promise of a good judgment. The world shall have a good judge, the wisest, the fairest, the best. On His judgment the world may rely, for His judgments admit of no reversal or improvement.

Recently it was my business to be in court. A difficult case was being considered. The happiness of innocent people was at stake. As the judge summed up the case in wise and measured words, I was compelled to say to myself, "Here is a judge who is concerned for but one thing — that the right shall prevail." To see such a judge administering the law was a source of great satisfaction. After hearing him speak I could not help but feel that the best interests of all were safe and sure.

When we read from God's word how Jesus Christ shall judge the world, when we think of all that Jesus said and did, we are compelled to say within our hearts, "Here is a judge who is concerned that the right shall prevail and that the innocent shall not suffer. Other judges may make mistakes. He will not. And because He will not, my case and cause in His court will be safe forever."

As we think of the mystery of iniquity, of the many people at large who ought to be behind the walls of a prison, of the murders that have never been solved, of the cruelties that have never been punished or corrected — as we think of all this, how comforting and sustaining it is for our weak faith to hear the King Jesus speaking to His own and saying, "Be patient just a little longer. The day is coming, it is not far distant, when all these matters shall be set right, when the world shall

know that goodness is better than badness, and that the Christian life is the only life that pays in the end."

Christ was not defeated because the crowd changed its tune and crucified Him. Christ did not lose His kingship through the cross. Christ and His church are not doomed because they must go through the valley of suffering. The Apostle says, "Wherefore God also highly exalted Him and gave unto Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue should confess that Jesus is the Christ, to the glory of God the Father."

Accept His Word as truth. Give Him the highest authority in your life. Make Him "Lord of Lords and King of Kings." Yours shall be the crown, His shall be the glory.

Monday in Holy Week

THE PANORAMA OF CALVARY

ARTHUR M. SIMONSEN

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DES MOINES, IOWA

Monday in Holy Week

And Jesus answered them, saying, the hour is come, that the Son
of man should be glorified.

John 12:23

THE PANORAMA OF CALVARY

John 12:23

An unforgettable sight has been related by a young man who was a passenger on a transport plane flying from New Caledonia to San Francisco. Upon arrival, the pilot circled around the city to give the passengers a panoramic view. As they received this complete expanse of San Francisco's bridges, parks, docks, buildings and islands, they were given a fuller appreciation of one of America's great centers.

Jesus gave His followers a panoramic view of the last events of His life in Jerusalem. On several occasions He had told them about His coming death in order that they might be prepared to accept it as a normal and inevitable part of God's plan of redemption.

While they were still in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the Scribes, and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify Him; and the third day He shall rise again."

This was the panoramic view. Giving them a synopsis of the entire Passion would enable them to more fully understand and appreciate the individual events.

On the occasion of the Gospel for Monday in Holy Week, Jesus and His followers had come to Jerusalem and were stay-

ing with their friends, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, at Bethany. Mary had anointed Him with a precious ointment and had received severe criticism from Judas. Jesus immediately said, "Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this," namely, "to anoint me, as she has done in advance for my burial." Then He said, "Me ye have not always," which again prophesies the death so near at hand.

Some time after Jesus had made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, He said to Andrew and Philip, "The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified." The actual day of Jesus' death was not yet come, but "the hour," or time, for His death had arrived. Jesus always spoke of this event as a victory. "That the Son of man should be glorified" has the victorious note much the same as the occasion of the Transfiguration when Jesus was speaking to Moses and Elijah about the "decease which he was about to *accomplish* at Jerusalem."

Just as Jesus gave His followers in advance a complete view of the events of Calvary is it well for us also to have this panoramic view of Calvary on this Monday of Holy Week. As the week progresses and we meditate upon the separate events, it will be easier for us to place them in their proper relationship to the whole plan of salvation. To see the panorama of Calvary is to see a victory for eternity.

As the panorama of Calvary unfolds we see a Christ subjected to unbearable physical anguish. After Jesus had endured a long night of abuse at the hands of corrupt and vicious leaders; after He had experienced desertion by the members of His own household, His recent followers, and even His own apostles; after He had been whipped and beaten by rough hands; and after His exhausted limbs had refused the weighty burden of the cross, He finally arrived at the scene of crucifixion, where He was to undergo one of the ghastliest forms of death.

After He was nailed to the cross and it was roughly planted in the earth, the fleshly structure of His hands yielded to the weight of the body, crushing and displacing the bones and causing unendurable pain. The unnatural position of His arms and body, as well as His lacerated flesh and gaping wounds, so distressed His muscles that the least motion caused violent pain.

As the weary hours slipped by, the circulation was obstructed, inflammation set in, the respiration became unnatural, the lungs and heart became congested, and a consuming fever was induced, which resulted in a tormenting thirst. Death came slowly, too slowly, while muscles, nerves, and bones agonized with a desire for its coming.

His enemies took one long, last look at the cross and then strode off with the satisfied feeling that the threat to their power and position had finally been brought to an end. As they returned to their vicious practices with a smug complacency and a haughty, overbearing demeanor, they were confident that the impostor was through.

Even to his own followers it was apparent that the Son of man had been defeated and God's plan of salvation had been interrupted. But wait — the whole story of Calvary has not yet been told.

The panorama of Calvary also reveals a Christ subjected to an unendurable spiritual anguish.

As Christ was hanging on the cross, darkness enveloped the earth, dramatically proclaiming that even God, His Father, had forsaken Him.

Jesus was accustomed to being forsaken. The members of His own household had turned from Him. His fellow-citizens at Nazareth had rejected Him. Many followers who would have made Him king on Palm Sunday cried, "Crucify Him,"

on Friday. Even His own apostles forsook Him; one betrayed Him. But when despised and rejected of men, He always had God, His Father, to turn to. But now, even God had forsaken Him. This was almost more than He could endure. From the lowest depths of despair, His soul cried out, "Why?"

As the drama of Calvary is brought to this terrible climax, we also ask the question, "Why?" Why must the Son of man be rejected even by God?

The answer is self-evident. Just as sin caused a wide breach in the relationship between Adam and Eve, and God, and caused them to feel completely shut out from God's all-encompassing love, Christ now experienced that same exclusion which becomes inevitable when sin's devastating power is felt. Since Jesus had accepted the responsibility of the sins of all those who willingly accept Him as their substitute, it also became necessary for Him to accept the unavoidable consequences of those sins. Rejection became an absolute certainty. Sin cannot be harmonized with God. Evil cannot be harmonized with pure goodness.

As Christ was enduring this unequalled agony of being rejected by heaven and earth, to the innocent bystander it would again appear that the plan of salvation had been defeated. But wait — the view continues.

The panorama of Calvary reveals in the face of apparent defeat a glorious victory for eternity. "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified."

Not defeat but victory, not failure but triumph, were in those words. In His suffering and death He was accepting the final penalty of the world's sin. He was being wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was being laid upon Him, and with His stripes we were being healed.

Spiritual death is separation from God. Jesus died spiritually when He experienced the rejection of His Father. However, because of the fact that He Himself was sinless, this rejection was not permanent. He could also say, "Into Thy hands I commend my spirit." Christ died that we need not die. He was separated from God that we need not be separated. That which was apparent defeat was merely part of a plan which gives us a complete redemption.

Gordon Hurlbutt relates the story of a group of men who had gathered for an annual deer hunt. The hunters took various positions and waited for an opportunity to fire. A deer skirted a corner of an open field near the best marksman of the group, who immediately took aim and fired. The deer staggered, but continued to run. His excited companions called out, "Fire again. You missed your mark." But the marksman calmly answered, "I took good aim, watch him fall." The deer ran a few more yards and then staggered and fell.

Jesus, the divine marksman, fired from Calvary the fatal shot against sin and death and the devil. Even though these forces of evil are still running rampant we can calmly proclaim with complete assurance that God's plan of salvation is victorious. Redemption is complete. The victory is for eternity. May God grant that we may lay hold of this salvation which is ours through faith.

Tuesday in Holy Week

IF ANY MAN WILL COME AFTER ME

ARNOLD L. CONRAD

St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church

ROSE BAY, NOVA SCOTIA

Tuesday in Holy Week

And he said unto them all: If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.

Luke 9:23-24

IF ANY MAN WILL COME AFTER ME

Luke 9:23-24

It must have been with much pain that Jesus told His disciples that He was soon to leave them. The years for preparing them for their great ministry were drawing to a close. His work was moving quickly to completion. Jesus was soon to be crucified. He knew this. He told His disciples what he was facing, saying, "The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain and be raised the third day."

We can almost see Him calling His disciples together, in a very calm manner saying, "Brethren, we've been with one another for years — your company has meant much to me. I have learned to know you, and we have grown very close to one another. But we must now part. I am about to go through much suffering and rebuke and pain. In truth, I am going up to Jerusalem to be killed."

Imagine the surprise, the horror, and the tenseness of His disciples as they looked into the face of Jesus. Never before did He seem so precious to them. Surely this could not happen to Jesus — the One whom they loved.

But Jesus set His face and continued, "As for you, my brethren, I give you a choice. You can come with me or you can go home."

"To those who wish to follow me, I am going to be frank

— the way will be difficult; you too will have to suffer many things and be rebuked and probably die.”

He was determined to make known to His disciples the cost of following Him. Jesus faced reality and He would have all those who follow Him do the same. And he said unto them all, *“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.”*

These words spoken by Jesus throw out to us a challenge to heroic living based on and rooted in His sufferings which had their climax upon the cross of Calvary.

We often speak of His Holy Cross with reverence and love. We mold it into symbols of gold and precious metals. We place it high upon the spires of our churches. We have made the cross the greatest of all human symbols. And yet how little we sometimes comprehend the love and the grace of Him who died upon it. We sometimes forget that this very cross is not only a symbol of Christ's sufferings and death but that, whenever we look upon it, we should see there for us a challenge to heroic living.

This challenge has both a negative and a positive angle. First of all let us consider the negative.

The challenge of the cross of Christ is to deny your unregenerated self. And Jesus said to them all, *“If any man wishes to come after me, let him deny himself.”*

We see from this part of our text that it is a matter of choice to follow Christ, but once the resolution is formed to do so, there is no alternative but to deny oneself. This is a hard choice and one to which many cannot submit. Natural in man is that contemptible love for self, and with it goes little or no thought for others. In man and animal alike is found

the instinct for self-preservation; and I don't think I am wrong when I say, "I think it is always working overtime."

Underlying all the activities of the world, in the social, political, national, yes, in every phase of life, we see this principle at work. Here in this text Jesus sets Himself in direct antagonism to that self-seeking in man which produces pride, selfishness, and other evils of the flesh; to that part of men which urges him to consider himself as all-important, self-sufficient in life, so well expressed in the rhyme

I lived for myself, I thought for myself,
For myself and none other beside,
Just as if Jesus had never lived —
As if He had never died.

Jesus sees in this instinct for self-preservation a barrier to the development of the deeper spiritual life in man. Christ speaks disparagingly of the man who would save his life at the expense of his loyalty to Christ. Jesus condemns the man who willingly compromises his moral and spiritual principles to save his neck. This type of self-preservation brings death, says Jesus. "Who-soever will save his life shall lose it."

If any man wishes to follow Christ, the first thing he must do is to deny himself. By self-denial Jesus did not mean the self-denial as it is popularly understood today, as for instance the abstinence from petty indulgences during the Lenten season. I am sure that Jesus does not want us to adopt asceticism as a mode of life, as monks of the past have done. No! I believe that here Christ meant something deeper.

By self-denial Christ meant a yielding of the whole self to the will of God as Jesus did in the garden of Gethsemane: *Not my will but thine be done.*

Christ does not want us to scorn and to deny all the good things of life but he was deeply concerned about the major

interests and goal of our lives, so much so that he even died upon the cross that we might find that true goal by pointing out to us the way to attain it through selflessness. What is our ruling passion? Is it Christ or is it mammon? If we wish to follow Jesus, our ruling passion must be Jesus and not the selfish interests of the unregenerated natural man.

In the positive sense then, self-denial means to give ourselves wholly and completely to God. This is the challenge of the cross of Christ.

If there was anyone who had the right to challenge another to self-denial and self-forgetfulness, it was Christ. As we review His life, especially as we meditate on the history of the Passion during this Lenten season, we cannot help but realize that he gave His life fully and completely to God and He worked unselfishly in the interest of all. He regarded His life not as His own but as belonging to God.

We too should regard our lives not as our own but as belonging to God. This idea, once grasped, does more than anything else to deepen the religious life of the Christian.

You are bought with a price, and that price was paid by Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary.

Lord Jesus, when we stand afar
And gaze upon Thy holy cross,
In love of Thee, and scorn of self,
O may we count the world as loss.

This symbol of unselfish love and self-forgetfulness of Christ gives us the power and the inspiration to take up its challenge, to accept Christ as our Saviour, to become new creatures in Him and on the basis of this new life in us to deny the old Adam, the natural man by constantly keeping it in subjection. The cross of Christ gives to every uplifted heart the power and the inspiration to live heroically for Christ.

With his complete surrender of self to God, man becomes a new creature with new *powers*, new *attitudes* and *desires*, but the possession of these is not to be considered an end in themselves, for Christ said, "To whom much has been given, much is required." Therefore, the cross of Christ continues the positive aspect of this challenge to heroic living, namely, the affirmation of this new regenerated self in Christ. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."

As we become new creatures in Christ, the old self is forgotten and new powers, attitudes, and potentialities are implanted in us through faith and fellowship with Him.

What are we to do with these powers? They have been given to us in order that we may take up our cross *daily* and follow Him.

We are not to sit back in self-satisfaction because we are now Christians. Instead, Christ challenges us to live dangerously for His sake. Note that Christ is the standard, He is the Guide. We are to be cross-bearing Christians in the steps of the Master.

An athlete, in order to keep fit, goes through strenuous exercise every day. How much more should the spiritual life in us be strengthened and developed by the exercising of the new powers implanted within us? They must be strengthened by daily application. We are to use these powers to develop and to round out fully our new regenerated selves in Christ. Jesus points out the way for such exercise: We are to take up our cross daily and follow Him.

The cross we are to bear is our own cross assigned to us by God. It is the cross of suffering and pain "for Christ's sake." It is the cross of witnessing for Christ for the extension of His kingdom. It is the cross of living lives that hold to the standards

of Christ and that bear silent influence upon others. It is the cross that completely surrenders self to God in willing and in loving service.

This, then, is the cross we are to bear every day of our lives at home, in our work, wherever we may be.

Now those who take up the challenge of the cross of Christ to heroic living for Christ's sake will have a most difficult task.

Living a Christlike life, bearing the cross for Christ's sake, will invite the enmity and antagonism of the world. Daily as we take our cross and follow Christ, so daily we will be confronted with the trials and temptations, the buffetings and scornings, of those who live and do otherwise. It is here where many a Christian is beaten. He is not willing and ready to suffer persecution for Christ's sake. Someone has said that more of the cross is seen outside the church than in it. What, for example, is the cause in this world for which more people are willing to die than for any other? Nationalism. Countless millions of people at their country's call will go out literally to lay down their lives. Fosdick says: "If Christians as a whole were as willing to sacrifice life and property for their cause as communists are for theirs, we could lift the world off its hinges."

We should not give up because we discover to our surprise that Christianity is not an easy religion. We must persevere for Christ's sake, for in perseverance even unto death there is life. Only the life that *remains* in Christ for his sake will participate in the fullness of that life in the Resurrection, as Christ says: "Whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it."

It is absolutely necessary that we persevere and bear our cross — otherwise we cannot follow him, for Christ said: "Whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple." If we scorn the cross we shall not gain the

crown. If we fail to bear our cross, for us there is no crown.

Grant us, dear Lord, our cross to bear,
Till at Thy feet we lay it down,
Win through Thy blood our pardon there
And through the cross attain the crown.

Many find it easier to follow the paved highways of worldly pleasures; but Christ, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, points us to the rough, winding way on which there is little of the world's traffic; where self must be forgotten and Christ made the controlling guide. This is the way of the cross.

Paul caught the glory of following the way of the cross. It may mean suffering, it may mean the scoffs and sneers of the self-sufficient, but if we are to follow Christ we are to deny self and bear the cross, remembering "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us," for

If we be dead with Christ,
We shall live also with him;
If we suffer, we shall also reign.

Faced with the challenge of the cross of Christ to heroic living, how can anyone with reason and fairness say that Christianity is weak and serves as a means of escape?

We do not want an easy religion. We scorn those who would make Christianity a religion for the sissy. We want a commanding, challenging religion that will take all we have and then call for more. We find it on the way of the cross.

We are looking for the heroic, are we not? If you can find a life which demands more sacrifice, a way of life which takes more of our powers, more of our vitality, than the life to which we are challenged by the cross of Christ, let me know, for I am looking for that way. But until you can, I will take

my stand for carrying the cross which He gives me to carry
daily and will follow Him, for that to me

Demands all (and more than) I can give
And gives all (and more than) I deserve.

Amen.

Wednesday in Holy Week

AND PETER REMEMBERED

MARTIN J. HOEPPNER

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BUFFALO, NEW YORK

Wednesday in Holy Week

And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out and wept bitterly.

Luke 22:61-62

AND PETER REMEMBERED

Luke 22:61-62

Almost overlooked among the very important events of the Passion of our Lord is the happening described in our text. It has been a time of greatest tension in the heart of Jesus and of Peter as well. The night of the institution of the Lord's Supper and of the farewell by Jesus had definitely sapped the strength and the courage of even as tempestuous a character as Peter. Though he had promised the Saviour that he would never deny Him, that he was ready to be imprisoned for His sake, yes, that he was even ready to die for Him, Peter at the moment stands before us a beaten, crushed, defeated, and lonely soul. All his resolve to be true to his Master has faded. His courage has left him. He just stands there dejected and does not know what to do next. Have you ever felt that way? Have you ever found yourself defeated and frustrated, and wondered just how you could find an escape from all this? Well, Peter found something, and you and I can find that same thing, if only, I say, if only we look for it.

As he stood there, the sinful denier of his blessed Master, Peter saw someone. "The Lord turned and looked upon Peter." Oh, that gracious, loving, sorrowful, sympathetic look of Jesus. He knew what Peter had done, even though he hadn't heard the actual denials. He knew what Peter needed, even though He Himself was in need of love and understanding. He turned,

in His own desperate hour, and looked upon Peter. We have often wished that it might have been our privilege at one time or another to have a look upon the loving countenance of Jesus. But this "Jesus looked upon Peter" was something of far greater worth than that. In Jesus' look upon Peter we see the whole heart of a loving Saviour. Here He looks upon a soul which has fallen into desperate and dismal sin. Peter has denied that he knew the Lord, and yet the Lord turns and looks upon Peter with but one goal in mind. Jesus wants to save that soul. He wants to redeem Peter who has denied Him, He wants to make Peter strong in the faith, strong enough in later years to die on the cross for the sake of his faith in Jesus Christ.

And then "Peter remembered the word of the Lord." The look of Jesus upon Peter and Peter's recognition of that loving Master of his, brought Peter to "remember" what the Lord had told him. Here was the very real thing which Peter needed in his hour of frustration and defeat. Jesus' look upon Peter causes the erring disciple to remember the warning given him earlier that same night. He knew then and there that Jesus had looked far beyond his own conception of his faith in Christ, and that Jesus had prepared for just this need in Peter's heart and life. And this "remembering" of the word of the Lord led Peter to a humble repentance. Peter was definitely sorry for what he had done. He meant to do something about it too. Judas also was "sorry" for what he had done and took it upon himself to right that wrong. But Peter was more than sorry and he realized that the only one who could help him in this desperate need was Jesus Himself. So Peter "went out and wept bitterly." Let us be careful about our reaction to this thing which Peter did. He "went out and wept *bitterly*." To me that means that Peter in his tears and in his sorrow showed

definite repentance. That word "bitterly" means that he really felt the horror of the terrible sin he had committed. His heart was broken when he considered the terrible thing he had done. And in his state of broken-heartedness Peter repented.

We all know the results of these two actions: "The Lord looked upon Peter" and "Peter went out and wept bitterly." Peter repents, Jesus forgives him, and Peter becomes that strong, honest, fearless Apostle whom we admire and love and remember. I often wonder what the Christian Church of today would have as its history had it not been for the fact that Jesus turned and looked upon Peter and that Peter repented. Personally, there seems to me to be a problem of spiritual arithmetic here before us. We too are often guilty of even more terrible sins than Peter's sin was. We too often stand desperately in need of strength and forgiveness and if we can, under these circumstances, see Jesus *look* upon us, and if we can, then, bring ourselves to confession and repentance, we too may in God's kind mercies, be made into a power for good in our Church and in our world today.

Peter's mistake was that he had too much self-confidence. Doesn't that sound very modern, very up-to-date? Peter was too unwatchful. Isn't that something of which we too are guilty? In our day we hear so much of "being saved." All around us little groups of people set up "store-front churches" and call upon their members to be "saved." Religious revivals call upon thousands to make Jesus their Saviour and to be "saved." This is all very good, but to me it does not go far enough. Just because I feel that I am saved and that Jesus is my Saviour, does that mean that from now on I need not worry about my salvation. We — that is, too many of us — believe that just because we are saved we have reserved seats in heaven which no one can take away from us, no matter how late we

come to claim these reservations. We believe that we can lick the whole world because we call ourselves Christians. Let us remember that, as someone has said, "Conversion is but the first grade primer of a Christian life." It is that *look of Jesus* upon us which we need today. Have you ever realized that of all the people you met and passed on your way to church, only one of every three have been in some church this past week? It is not enough simply to know our sins; but, through that mercy of Jesus looking upon us, we must be brought to honest and true and sincere repentance. But that look of Jesus we must see, and see clearly, before it can help us.

Let me show you what I mean through the instrument of a delightful story which has often been told. It happened at a gathering in England. A very famous actor was called upon to recite the Shepherd Psalm and he did it with all his careful diction and clever acting. He finished with a spontaneous round of applause and taking a deep bow he seated himself. The next person called upon was a dear old preacher. He too recited the words of the Shepherd Psalm but when he had finished and had seated himself, there was no applause, there was silence and there were tear-dimmed eyes. After a moment or two the actor rose again and said, "Friends, when I recited the Twenty-third Psalm I reached your ears and eyes. This man has reached your hearts. I know the Shepherd Psalm; this man knows the Shepherd."

There you have the explanation of what I mean when I say that we must "see" that look of Jesus. We have been told that 25 per cent of our physical energy is used in sight. That's a lot of energy to be used in one single effort. But spiritually that's not enough energy to really "see" the look of Jesus upon us. We need to use every ounce of effort, every possible power we may be able to gather, to "see" Jesus. Once we have seen

Him our problem comes to a beautiful solution. We add the look of Jesus and our own repentance and we get — what?

What is really the solution of this problem? Must there be a great big loudly and widely advertised Revival Series? Must there be a terrible catastrophe? Must there be a terrific destruction by atomic power? My answer is a very positive and definite No. The solution lies in making the power of our faith, by looking upon the face of Jesus, so powerful that, rather than atomic power for destruction, we may have atomic power for building the lives and souls of men.

The cross of Jesus with its two beams, one pointing upward to God and the other outward to sinful man, is still what the world needs in our day and age. A Sunday school teacher distributed pictures of the crucifixion among her pupils and asked them to write a title under the picture. The one she liked best of all was by a six-year-old boy who wrote: "It was for me." That's the solution in all its truth and candor. It was for me that Jesus came to suffer, it was for me He died upon the cross. Oh, may the merciful Father in heaven put it into my heart this Lententide that all this suffering, all this being betrayed, denied, mocked, accused, convicted, and crucified, on the part of our loving Saviour, was for me.

Too many of us would rather die without mercy and salvation than accept pardon bought by Christ's own innocent and precious blood. Too many of us would rather sneer at Peter for his denial of Christ than study deeply the causes of his repentance and forgiveness. Too many of us would rather go blithely upon our merry way to destruction and to hell than give pause to our conscience and seek out the source of our salvation. It is my honest and my very sincere prayer that as we look upon this almost hidden event in the Passion Story of the look of Jesus upon Peter, and upon Peter's remembering

the words of Jesus, we may be led to apply this event to ourselves and to our own lives.

Christian friends, we need that look of Jesus, and we can have it if we want it. We need to remember the words of Jesus — and we can remember if we want to — and then when upon our sincere repentance the forgiveness of our sins is given us, may we be strengthened and encouraged to go forward into our daily living, into the lives of the people among whom we live, and may we be what we hope to be, what we should be — Christians in the very strictest sense of the meaning of that word. God help us to that end. Amen.

Thursday in Holy Week

WHERE PAST AND FUTURE MEET

L. H. STEINHOFF

The University Lutheran Church

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

Thursday in Holy Week

For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show
the Lord's death till he come.

1 Corinthians 11:26

WHERE PAST AND FUTURE MEET

1 Corinthians 11:26

On an early April evening, a small group of men was making its way through the streets of a large city. Around them jostled crowds of people, many of them from distant lands; their costumes were a pageantry of color; their dialects a medley of sound. The crowd was in a festive mood, having come to the city for an annual celebration. Acquaintances who had not met since last year, perhaps for several years, were noisily renewing old ties. There was friendly companionship; there was boisterous revelry; there was noise everywhere.

But the men in one little group were more subdued. While they felt something of the exhilaration of the occasion, they were conscious of a feeling of impending disaster. Their conversation was in scattered fragments. They followed a Leader, who knew just where He was going, and together they were intent on getting there. As the sun dropped over the horizon, they came to a modest home in the residence section of the city. Up the outside stairway they ascended in single file, and entered.

The room was of fair dimensions. A table was prepared for an evening meal. It was U-shaped, with three sides and an open end. On it were the simple dishes of the day; the food would be brought as soon as they were ready. The Leader, who was the Host, took his place. From his seat He would exercise His privilege and responsibility. The others were seeking to

gain the honored places on His right and on His left. Trying to be unobtrusive about it, they were quite obvious in their bungling attempts. The less aggressive ones took what places were left, arranging themselves according to personal friendships.

An atmosphere of awe pervaded the room. The voice of the city penetrated the thin walls. The shout of a driver to his donkey, urging greater speed through the crowded thoroughfare; the ribald laughter of a reveling group as one of its number told a story; the happy expression of friends long separated; the shrill laughter of children on the evening air. But in this upper room the men were aware that greater affairs were at stake than an annual religious celebration. Something in the attitude of their Leader filled them with awe. They sensed impending events which might affect their whole lives. And so their conversation was punctuated with pauses to catch the words which their Host was speaking.

Not that this was any ordinary meal, anyway. It was a very extraordinary one. The impelling force which had brought thousands to the city for this annual festival had brought these men, too. And throughout the city groups just like this were assembling for the same purpose. Small family groups usually; sometimes two or three families together; sometimes a dozen or so unattached individuals. But for this group, their families — if they had them — were far away. Having traveled as a group for some three years, it was natural that they should be together on this special occasion.

Many things took place in that upper room on this April evening, in the year of our Lord 29. As men jockeyed for position and advantage, their Leader gave them a practical demonstration, a visible lesson on humility; He washed their feet. There was the long discourse of our Lord, the truth with which

He comforted them against their impending sorrow. He told them of the Comforter who would come to them, the Paraclete who would "stand beside" them in days ahead, in which He pictured their close relationship to Himself in the parable of the vine and the branches. He poured out His soul in that high-priestly prayer for these His disciples and for His disciples to come. He warned the bold, impetuous, self-confident Peter of his expected denial. He called attention to the presence of a betrayer in their midst. All of these things were a part of that Holy Thursday in Jerusalem this April evening. But we concern ourselves, just now, with the central and focal point of it all, when He, their Leader, our Lord, led them — as He leads us — into the Holy of Holies of personal experience.

As we enter this sacred realm, we are conscious of the fact that here we are face to face with time and eternity. The past, the present, and the future all converge and find their focal point in this, the institution of the Lord's Supper, the Holy Sacrament of the Altar, the blessed Communion of our Lord and His people.

It looks to the past. Let us review the setting. It was a supper, but no ordinary supper. It was that season of the year when the thoughts of Hebrew people turned to a great national experience of the past. They looked back into their national history, and remembered a great deliverance. The panorama of events unfolded in their minds. Their forefathers, slaves in bondage in a strange land fifteen hundred years before, cried out to Jehovah for deliverance. Their God heard their cry, and sent a man to deliver them. Moses — prophet, leader, administrator — stood in Pharaoh's court, and in the name of Jehovah called for his people's freedom. The vacillating heart of Pharaoh now said "yes," now said "no." The plagues followed in rapid succession — tokens from the hand of a mighty God

that He still ruled the world. The last and most fearful of all, the death of all first-born of man and beast, fell upon the land of Egypt. Only the Hebrew people were saved.

And how were they saved? Because the Word of God came to them, instructing them to do certain things. Because they had faith in that Word of God, and did these things. The sacrificial lamb was killed; the blood was sprinkled on the doorposts. And when the angel of death came upon the land, he "passed over" the blood-marked homes. The first-born of believing Hebrew people were saved. And from that day on, each year at the same season, these people, and their children, and their children's children, observed the "Passover" in recognition of that mighty deliverance from death.

Many observed it by assembling in Jerusalem. Others observed it wherever they were, by joining in small groups, usually as families, to eat the Passover supper. At this supper a lamb would be the central dish. Unleavened bread would be served, with due formality and a ritual which recounted the event it commemorated. The wine would be distributed, with appropriate dialogue. Hearts would be filled with gratitude for deliverance of years past. And prayers would be offered for the continued blessings of the Almighty.

In that upper room, the first Holy Thursday night, our Lord administered that same supper to the little band with Him. He was Host; they were guests. But into it He injected a deeper meaning and significance. He was fully aware of what would happen to Him before another sun would set; they were uncertain, fearful. He would lead them into some conception of the events which would take place; He would give them, before His death, something they could tie to; He would make them conscious of His ever-abiding presence; He would give them something which would assure them of the permanent "Pass-

over," a passing-over of their sins by the angel of death. Something in the tone of His voice silenced the little group. In the pause which followed, the voice of the city drifted through the walls, but they did not hear it. Every ear was alert; hands which had been toying with the dishes were suddenly stopped; the listeners hardly dared to breathe. One can imagine the awe that filled them, as slowly and reverently He spoke out the words, "Take, eat, this is My Body, which is given for you; this do in remembrance of Me." "Drink ye all of it; this cup is the New Testament in My Blood, which is shed for you, and for many, for the remission of sins; this do, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me."

"In remembrance." Yes, this was what He said. They were remembering, as they ate, the deliverance of a people fifteen hundred years before. Now they were to remember something else. "Me." Himself! Their Leader. Their Host. Their Lord. Our Lord, our Saviour, our Christ. "Remember!" He went on to say, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do proclaim the Lord's death till He come." It would be a reminder of His death — of Him who died that men might live. A new Passover! A Passover of death again, yes! But now a Passover of eternal death. "This is my Body, given for you!" "This cup — My Blood — shed for the remission of sins!" Christ's Body! Christ's Blood! Calvary! Tomorrow would be the Day! John the Baptist had announced him, "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world!" Here was another Lamb, here was another Blood, here was another Death, here was another Deliverance from Death, here was another Passover. "Remember!" "As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do proclaim the Lord's death!"

So tonight, as we receive this Holy Sacrament, we look to the past. Nineteen hundred years and more we look back —

to a city, its name is Jerusalem — to a hill, its name is Calvary — to a cross, its name is Death — and to a Man, His name is Jesus, "Saviour." The eternal past — of God's eternal plan — of God's redeeming love — of the atonement achieved when He cried out on the cross, "It is finished!" The eternal past is brought into focus on this Holy Thursday, as we receive the Lord's Supper.

And we live in the present. On this Holy Thursday evening, in the year of our Lord, we feel something like that little band in the upper room in Jerusalem in the year 29. The noise of a city penetrates even these walls of brick and stone. Instead of a driver to his donkey, we hear the horn of an impatient driver; the revelry of a group of youth en route to a party; the laughter of children at play in the street. But here, within these hallowed walls, we have a "separated" feeling, and our ears are attuned to the words of our Host and Lord. In the Gospel lesson for Holy Thursday, we read again of the washing of the disciples' feet — the lesson of humility. In the Epistle lesson we read of the institution of the Lord's Supper. And our ears catch particularly that verse which is the basis of our meditation tonight, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do proclaim the Lord's death till He come." An interesting and significant word is here. The Authorized Version has it "show" — "ye do 'show' the Lord's death." The Revised Version and Moffatt render it "you 'proclaim' the Lord's death."

And that word has meaning for us! Do we not see here the great commission? In this Sacrament, received usually in the seclusion of our own churches, received by relatively a select few, we come to the deepest and richest Christian experience. And in this Sacrament we find the "witnessing" factor! "Ye do show" — "you proclaim" — we are telling, we are announcing, we are witnessing, we are evangelizing!

But how? In three respects. First, the Lord's Supper is an evidence of the unity of our Christian fellowship. On this Holy Thursday, we are deeply conscious of the separation of our families. A few years ago, as families they communed together at our altar. But tonight, though they are separated, there is a bond which holds them together. It is the consciousness of the ever-present Lord in this Holy Sacrament, which the absent, like those present, are privileged to receive. We had reports of our boys during the war communing throughout the states, in England, on the Continent, in Hawaii, in the islands of the South Pacific. They were knit together with us in this Holy Sacrament, and if they are still absent they are knit together with us this very Holy Thursday.

In the same way, the whole Christian Church on earth is knit together on this Holy Thursday. Tonight, more than on any day in the year, devoted followers of the Christ are gathering in their churches to receive this Holy Sacrament. Millions throughout the world are kneeling before God's altars. Even while we are receiving our Lord, with and under the consecrated elements tonight, at the very moment, countless thousands of others are doing the same. The Lord's Supper is truly a unity of Christian fellowship.

Second, it is a mark of the Christian Church. According to our confessions, the Church exists "where the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered." The Sacrament constitutes a vital link among the churches in many nations. The Body of Christ is a unit. "As often as ye eat *this* bread, and drink *this* cup, ye do proclaim the Lord's death." And so, in this Sacrament, the world beholds that the Christian Church is distinctive, and is one in accepting our Lord and His atoning work.

Third, there is a direct witnessing involved. At our Holy

Communion services, those who have not made themselves a part of the fellowship of Christ's Body, may see the believer proceeding to the chancel, kneeling before the altar, receiving the consecrated elements, bowing his head in meditation and adoration, returning with a radiant glow on his face that says to all, "I have received something which strengthens my soul!" And the inquirer into the mysteries of the Christian faith is moved to ask, "What is this which Christians receive in the Holy Communion?" The believing participant is witnessing to his faith. "As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do proclaim the Lord's death." We are telling the world that Christ died, that His death was for our sins, that we have received him as our Lord and Saviour, that we accept His blessed promises. "Proclaim!" "*Show* the Lord's death!" Witness!

Now we turn to the future aspect of Holy Thursday and the Lord's Supper. Jesus said, "As often as ye shall eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do proclaim the Lord's death, *until He come.*" "Until He come!" Only two days before, our Lord had been talking to His disciples about the Second Advent. He had talked about "times and seasons." He had made the event certain; the time a bit uncertain. But "he is coming again!" was the hope and expectation of the early Church. It lived on it; it thrived on it; it bore hardship, persecution, by faith in it.

And now, in the midst of a commemorative observance of a great national deliverance, he injects two thoughts: "proclaim" to all the world . . . "until He come." The gospels report a further statement of Jesus, in this connection, "I shall not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matt. 26:29). Here was to be a tie with the distant, undiscerned future. The disciples knew not how long it might be — some of them thought a matter of only a few years, perhaps — Paul thought it would

come in his own lifetime. But whenever it would be, our Lord would bring together, in prospect now, in retrospect then, the participation in this Holy Supper. "Until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

And for us today? Each time we receive the Holy Sacrament, each time we come to Holy Thursday, we are reminded of the fact that we are one season, one day, nearer to the day when He shall come again, to gather His saints into His eternal fellowship, to bring them into those "mansions prepared" for those who know and believe in Him. It is a glorious feeling, this of being "nearer my Father's throne than I've ever been before." Once we received Christ into our hearts, and confessed our faith before the altar; now, again and again, we receive Him, in faith, in the Holy Sacrament of His Supper; then — at that future time — we shall receive Him fully as we behold His blessed Presence when "every eye shall see Him." Victorious faith! Triumphant conviction! Glorious anticipation! "We shall see Him!"

Here, then, the past, the present, and the future are brought into focus. On this Holy Thursday, as we assemble to receive the Lord's Supper which He instituted on that first Holy Thursday, we reflect upon the great deliverance which He wrought for us in the past — a deliverance "from death and the devil." Holy Thursday and the Holy Communion remind us of the past — the Passover. At the same time we reflect upon the spread and outreach of our holy faith into all the world, uniting all believers in this great theme of redemption, and in the reception of the Lord's Supper. Holy Thursday and the Holy Communion remind us of present opportunities and responsibilities. We reflect upon the anticipation of our Lord's coming again, when He will consummate the fellowship for which He gave Himself in the past, and to which we give ourselves in the

present. Holy Thursday and the Holy Communion remind us of future glories.

"As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do proclaim the Lord's death, until He come." The eternal past, the expansive present, the everlasting future, all are converged in the focal point of Holy Thursday, and the Holy Supper which is Christ Himself, giving Himself, offering Himself. Graciously He invites us; gratefully we accept His invitation to "take, eat . . . the body of Christ; . . . take, drink . . . the blood of the New Covenant." We look back to His death; we feel His Real Presence; we receive Him in the elements; we are assured of our salvation; we are incited to greater devotion; we are strengthened for His service; we are inspired to greater witnessing; we look out to a world in need of Him; we look ahead to His coming in glory. Praise His Holy Name!

Good Friday

OUR RESPONSE TO THE CROSS

MALCOLM L. MINNICH

College Lutheran Church

SALEM, VIRGINIA

Good Friday

And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand and the other on the left. Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots. And the people stood beholding.

Luke 23:33-35

OUR RESPONSE TO THE CROSS

Luke 23:33-35

It is interesting to note the different responses to the cross of Jesus. This 23rd chapter of St. Luke describes some of them. Like fleeting pictures in a newsreel, the Gospel writer turns around to the crowd and gives you glimpses of men at the cross. "The people stood beholding." "The rulers derided Him." "The soldiers also mocked Him." "One of the malefactors railed on Him." "The other . . . said unto Jesus, 'Lord, remember me.'" "And all the people, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned." That is how men reacted to the cross. I wonder what our response would have been.

Through the years men have continued to behold the cross and to decide where they stood in relation to it. There are still those who join in the mockery of His enemies. There are others who simply look on, trying to be indifferent. Some express their sorrow, wish Him well, and go their way. Others believe in Him and find themselves drawn to Him in love and devotion. The fact remains that the cross is inescapable. It is no mere page of history that you read and turn to the next page, leaving it forever in the past. It is not simply an event of the long ago that you remember in reverence. It is a present reality to be faced. Its meaning is timeless. Its Christ lives today and confronts men with the call of God. Its grace is still offered to

him who will accept. The decisions men made at Calvary are decisions we still must make. A cross stands before us, and we must give an answer to its claims upon us.

It is Good Friday again. The day calls us to look once again at what happened at Calvary, to seek a deeper understanding of its meaning, and to examine in the light of the cross the response we are giving to the Christ who died for us.

What did happen at Calvary? It isn't a very pretty picture from the human point of view. That is why people sometimes ask why we call it "good" Friday. Sin in all its hideousness and brutality held men in its grip. Hate and pride, falsehood and cruelty, arrayed themselves "against the Lord and against His anointed." He who went about doing good was nailed like a public enemy to a cross. Truth and love and goodness seemed trampled in the mire. It was enough to send a thinking man home discouraged in spirit.

The bitter days of another world war revealed to us that the human side of Calvary is still here. Stories of brutality during the war, and since its close, rise up to haunt us. When the hearts of men are without God, the veneer we call civilization is very thin. It is still possible for sin to make beasts of men. The powers of evil continue to march through the earth, and if you leave God out of the picture, there are times like the one at Calvary when they seem to have won the day.

In that setting of human darkness, the love of God was revealed at Calvary. He who spoke to man in the past through His prophets was there speaking through His Son. It is "love's supreme disclosure." Don't ever forget that Jesus gave His life for us. No hands of men could have taken it from Him if He had been unwilling. Think of it! God's Son, here in the world, dying on a cross! It can mean but one thing. God is love, and here at Calvary His infinite love is reaching out to

save His wayward children. It is beyond our little understandings to comprehend. Like the brightness of the sun, our eyes can't take it in. But here it is, the love of God revealed amid our human sin and need, shedding its beauty and meaning into every experience.

The cross speaks also of life, and the power to live it victoriously. You see the Saviour in His hour of testing and you know that you are standing face to face with life as God meant for it to be — lovely, and strong, and triumphant. Here is one who could walk amid the dirt of the world and keep His own life unstained. He met the hate of men and gave love in return. When men lied about Him, beat Him, and nailed Him to a cross, He prayed for them. Through every injustice and bitter suffering He kept sweet in spirit and strong in faith. Before such courage, strength of character, and faith in the Heavenly Father, you bow your head in reverence and admiration. Here is God's revelation of life.

What happened at Calvary? Love and life were manifested to us in Christ. But that isn't all. Jesus Christ made atonement for the sins of man and provided complete salvation. It was more than revelation of God — it was God working on our behalf. In the language of the Apostle Paul, "He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." And the purpose of His cross was that "whosoever believeth in Him might not perish but have everlasting life."

The meaning of Calvary becomes very real when I see it linked up with my own life. The greatest truth in the universe is the fact that the cross of Jesus concerns my life today. It is not simply a heroic story of the past that I am to imitate. Nor is it drama that I view for a while and turn empty-handed to my world of reality. St. Paul understood its meaning when he

wrote to the Galatians regarding "the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me." You notice that personal pronoun "me." Last night in the Holy Communion the benefits of the cross were assured to me in a very personal way. Then I began to understand. It was my cross He bore. He had no sins for which to die. They were mine. His victory was my victory, and His love and mercy are offered me.

Yes, the cross is inescapable. We can't dismiss it with a wave of the hand and go our way as if it didn't concern us. It reveals a love we can't ignore. It pictures a life we can't afford to forget. It offers the grace of God as the only way to salvation and eternal life. And in all its promises and expectations, God seems to be looking right at us. We must give an answer.

Now what is the response we owe? God expects first of all that we have faith in Him. How can we meet the cross except with a believing heart? Divine mercy continues to flow from Calvary to him who believes. The simple prayer of a dying thief threw open the gates of heaven, but there had to be faith enough to pray, "Remember me." A God of infinite love and power stands ready to help us, and the only thing that can defeat us is an unbelieving heart. Man's worst sin is to see God revealed at the cross and still to doubt Him. The faithfulness He expressed calls for a response in childlike trust. Divine love which went that far will never fail us. We answer that love by trusting.

Looking upon the cross we learn anew that salvation is not by human merit but by the grace of God. Standing in His presence, we see ourselves in guilt and unworthiness, and we marvel at the love of God that would want us and go that far to save us. We realize then that our answer to Calvary is not a faith in ourselves nor hope in our own achievements, but a trust in the mercy and saving power of God.

The cross demands, too, our allegiance. The Apostle began some of his letters with the words, "Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ." Chains of love had bound him to Jesus, and he became henceforth His servant. How could it be any other way? "We love Him because He first loved us." Here is the power that makes us His. Love gets into the heart and circulates through the blood stream, and we are bound to Him in loyalty and devotion. The slave who toils under the watch of a guard may escape. The workman who labors only because of duty may manage to excuse himself. The servant who works for reward will turn to other tasks when the pay is greater. But when the love of Jesus Christ gets hold of a man, he is going to be faithful.

When we have responded in faith and allegiance, we can be sure there will be Christian action. That is the real evidence of discipleship. It is fine to sing about the cross and to praise its Christ, but the real question is, "What are we going to do about it?" Christianity is not something to be praised, but to be practiced. It is action that counts. God looked at a lost world and did something about it. Too often we look at the cross and do nothing.

Here is power to lift us out of our little selfish ways into the richer, happier life that is in Christ. Our response is to let it lift us. You have watched the field of grain, flattened by the storm, slowly lifted by the drawing power of the sun. Through the cross God is drawing us to a better way of life. The cross never leaves you where you were. You can't explain it from a human point of view, but in the presence of the Christ there is a change in you. Those words "repentance" and "obedience" aren't mere words any more. You break with old paths and seek new ones. The power of Christ works in you His miracle of new life.

There is another form of Christian action which is inspired by the cross. It lays upon your heart a sense of divine mission, and puts you to work in Christian service. One man put it this way, "Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel." Through every untaught human being, through every lonely suffering fellow-man, through every evil that remains here to curse God's loved ones, God is calling His children to Christian action. It is unthinkable that one could stand before the cross of Jesus and turn back to his duties of the day without an overwhelming desire to be a better servant of Jesus Christ.

This Good Friday finds many a man taking lightly his Christian religion. Men for whom Christ died continue to live as if there had been no cross. The grace God offered in Jesus is still able to save to the uttermost, yet men close their hearts to Him. Millions are in need of the message and ministry of the Christian Church, and we limp along in weakness and half-hearted consecration. It's time to confront the cross, to face honestly its claims upon us, and to respond in the deeper faith, the loving allegiance, and the Christian action to which it calls us.

The Seven Words on the Cross

TRIUMPHANT WORDS

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The Seven Words on the Cross

Never man spake like this man.

John 7:46

TRIUMPHANT WORDS

John 7:46

Every Lenten season devout Christians gather around the cross. Before our eyes, and certainly in our hearts, must be a picture of three crosses etched against a darkly clouded sky. On one cross a murderer, on another a thief, and in between the man with a crown of thorns on His head. We agree that the saddest word in human speech is sin, and the matchless story of the Bible has it that sin nailed this man to that central cross. It also tells us that while on the cross He spoke seven words.

In preaching a sermon on the seven words of Jesus on the cross every pastor must feel his utter inability, to say nothing of his unworthiness, to do justice to a subject so profoundly moving and mysterious. Who of us can ever put himself in Jesus' place and say that he understands why He said and did the things on the cross recorded of Him? Can any of us ever love our fellow-men as He did? Does any of us have trust in God as He had? Without such love and trust how can we ever fully understand the cross? As another has said, "We have to know Him before we can understand Him." Where is there a man so presumptuously bold and so childishly foolish as to say that humanity can ever fully understand divinity?

Let us humbly and with deep reverence hear these words again, assured at the outset that we cannot fully understand

them, but knowing also that they speak words of courage and hope and infinite love. To me they are triumphant words, each surcharged with victory.

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

It has always been hard to forgive. However strong our faith, however great our love, we are slow to forgive another who has harmed us. The world doesn't pretend to understand forgiveness. It looks upon it as weakness, as defeatism. It says it is much more manly to permit the storms of passion to surge, to show anger and hate and revenge. The malicious attitude of the occupants of the other crosses is much more comprehensible. But if you have ever sought to really forgive another, you will know how hard it is — and how glorious. A man gains a victory when he forgives the one who has harmed him. It is not weakness. It demands strength of character. It is an achievement that brings a song to the heart and sweet music to the soul.

A few years ago the *Reader's Digest* carried a touching story entitled, "Drama in Everyday Life," by A. J. Cronin. It was the story of an ordinary family living in the suburbs of New York who took a refugee boy into their home. He was a strange boy, perhaps not altogether normal, but he had developed a strong attachment for the little son of the home, aged six. Came the day when he became terribly sick with a serious septic infection and for a week he hovered between life and death. No sooner was he on the road to recovery than he longed to see his little friend, the son of the home. Because of the danger of contagion this was not permitted. But a few days later when the father went to call his son Sammy to breakfast, he was profoundly disturbed to find the refugee boy in his son's bed. They were in each other's arms. The son went

down with the same disease directly after and died four days later. Most of us would agree with a friend of that family, that no time should be lost in getting rid of the boy who had been the instrument, however unwittingly, of the other's death. But the father adopted the little refugee.

Love and forgiveness so amazing are rare indeed. But a spirit like that gives us only a slight insight into the forgiving love of Christ which called forth the prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Man can only humbly try to imitate the Saviour here. He can hardly hope to know the depths of victory in this prayer.

It has been said so often that that cry was not only for the crowd on Calvary's hill that day — not only for Pilate, or the priests, or the soldiers, for poor Peter and the fleeing disciples. It was a prayer for you and me, too. It is a prayer that forever calls on the heart of God. It pleads with Him for everyone who sees his sin and longs for pardon. It is a prayer, too, for those who do not see their sin, but who still need forgiveness. It takes in all and excludes none.

"Today thou shalt be with me in Paradise."

As if to assure the most skeptical and convince the most despairing that this prayer is for them also we have Jesus' second word on the cross. It is interesting to speculate concerning the things which caused the conversion of Dysmas, the thief on the cross, in the eleventh hour of his life. Did the kingly bearing of the Christ convince him of His messiahship? As a Jew he would know the longing in the heart of Israel. Were the taunts and insults hurled by the mob, "He saved others, Himself He cannot save," and so on, the words which became for him the means of grace? That is possible, is it not? God can make the very wrath of man to praise Him. Was it,

as, we are told, so often happens in dying moments, the remembrance of loving parents praying for their son that made him seek to make his peace with God? Or was it the quiet, noble utterances of our Lord Himself, a few of which he heard, that proved to be the deciding factor in the victory for his soul? It doesn't really matter, does it? God continues to move in a mysterious way His wonders to perform.

No one can face the journey through the valley, in his right mind, without tremendous thoughts breaking in upon his heart. I remember receiving a letter from one of the boys overseas, who was in the thick of battle at the time of writing to me and who was wondering about the uncertainty of the developing drama. He asked this question, "Where does this road lead to?" Where indeed! How terribly dark and forbidding the contemplation of death without the comforting, reassuring words of Jesus, "Today thou shalt be with me in paradise." How much richer, more blessed, our faith because of this word of Christ to the dying thief. Is not every life a constant battle against sin? Do we not always need the hope held out here? If sin has laid us low and is about to make its last thrust and forever close every opportunity to hope and life, the picture of this second word is the Master standing there even then, and holding out His grace. I know how tremendously difficult the question becomes when we would argue the righteousness of works. Then we cannot understand the second word at all. How can paradise be promised to a man in the closing moments of his life, who all his lifetime lived in league with the Prince of darkness? Can a man move from almost certain damnation to eternal salvation so quickly? Of course not, if his salvation depends upon his own righteous deeds. We know how long it takes to shape even a moderately good moral character. But when our salvation becomes Christ's

act then the story is entirely different. Then it is idle to speculate whether grace operates slowly or swiftly. Our hope and peace are in the fact that it operates — Christ's way.

Thy work alone, O Christ,
Can ease this weight of sin;
Thy blood alone, O Lamb of God;
Can give me peace within.

"Woman, behold thy son. Son, behold thy mother."

Can it be that the order of the first three words indicates the order in which God deals with men? First, for those farthest from Him, those who in their ignorance crucify the Lord of Life, a prayer of forgiveness, then for a seeking soul assurance and promise even in the eleventh hour, and then, and not till then, gentle, loving regard for those nearest, the faithful? We would reverse that order, would we not? But it is a sobering thought, isn't it, that Christ spoke the words in this order? "Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance." He came to seek and to save the lost. What would happen to our world if every Christian followed this order, if every pastor and congregation would seek the lost first and then minister to those already redeemed? How little regard we have for the millions without a shepherd. Others first, that is Christ's way. And the farther away they are, the greater His concern. But that is not to imply that there is indifference to loved ones. Far from it. It is only a seeing of love in true perspective. The greater the need, the greater the love and concern of Christ.

But should we turn over all the pages of history, I doubt if we could find an illustration of deeper tenderness and more glorious love than in Jesus' attitude and words to Mary and

John. "Woman, behold thy son. Son, behold thy mother." Perhaps this word alone comes nearest to our understanding, because it is the most human. Who of us does not feel deeply when loved ones leave us? All the deepest, finest, and most beautiful emotions of which our hearts are capable are realized then. It is good to have this word of Jesus. I like to think that so He forever speaks tenderly and comfortingly and encouragingly to all of us. He is our friend. He gives cheer and hope to our aching hearts. When we feel very much alone, in His gracious providence He brings members of the church to greet us and speak to us in His name. What a joy and peace such Christian fellowship and love bring to our hearts! I have been wondering if in these words He is not telling us in these days of confusion and hate, "Take one another to your hearts, know the joy of mutual love and responsibility."

"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

To turn to the fourth word on the cross is like moving from a room of brilliant sunshine into darkness so deep and terrible that one is hardly conscious of the flickering light in the faraway corner. For let us never forget, whatever its meaning — it is a prayer, and there is a flickering light. "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Who can ever understand this cry? I know what many theologians say about it. And it is entirely possible that they are right. I believe they are. Paul says, "God hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God." And Isaiah centuries before in his great messianic chapter put it this way: "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." Was it at the moment of this tragic cry that complete atonement was made

for the sins of the world? Was it then that He offered to God perfect and complete satisfaction for our sins? And is it possible that as our sin-bearer He was completely forsaken of God? Even Luther had no explanation for this mystery. A professor of Hebrew of my acquaintance, in an interpretation of the Twenty-second Psalm from which this cry is taken, says this, "The meaning of 'forsake' deserves careful study. Humanly, it sometimes means to go away from physically, but more especially to leave a person in some condition. God's forsaking of men is not spiritual alienation (for which a different word is used) but always is handing them over to foes or leaving them to the power of enemies, refusing to interfere in what befalls. The parallel phrase which follows, 'far from helping me,' shows the meaning exactly and indubitably." And he continues, "When Jesus used this, some believe he put into it a much deeper meaning of spiritual desolation than the original in Psalm 22 had. But others believe that He was fully aware of the whole context, which rises from depths of anguish to heights of triumph, and held fast to a sustaining confidence in the divine vindication and victory to which he was passing."

Whatever is the right explanation, it has seemed to me that even this pathetic wail is a cry of victory. Whether He was completely forsaken or not, He did what He set out to do. By His death on the cross He became the world's Saviour. Through that act God for Jesus' sake is reconciled to me. As another has said, "If He was truly forsaken, it was that I might not be; if He was an outcast from God, it was that I might not be."

Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

"I thirst."

I have been speaking of each word of the cross as a word

of victory — of triumph. But how can His next word ever be described thus? I know it is usually explained as the cry of one whose lips are parched and dry, whose fever-stricken body cries for a drop of water, who is knowing indescribable suffering. And certainly it is that. But I think it is more than that. If our understanding of the fourth word comes as near to the correct interpretation as is humanly possible; if Jesus assumed the world's guilt, yours and mine, and for that terrible moment of his heart-rending cry was God-forsaken; and if God meted out upon Him the punishment of the world's sin, and yet in spite of all that desolation He was still a victor, then this cry "I thirst" is not a cry of terrible anguish so much as it is a cry of relief, looking toward victory. A great burden has been lifted. The fever-stricken patient is showing signs of returning consciousness. He is aware now, as the tremendous burden of the world's sin is lifted from Him, of a human distress: He thirsts. Lips that are dry and parched need the cool refreshing touch of water if they would form the triumphant words which are to follow. If the desire for water is so that he might speak more clearly the concluding words on the cross, then this fifth word, "I thirst," is certainly a word of victory. I am aware that this is not the usual understanding of this word. Many authorities would render this word as in itself a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. But other authorities would remove the comma after the word "accomplished" and make John 19:28 read: "Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, 'I thirst.' " This is the interpretation that has special appeal for me. After the cry of Godforsakenness, Jesus, knowing that all had been done by Him for man's redemption (all that Scripture had prophesied He would do as Saviour of the world), speaks the word "I thirst" in order that with refreshed and moistened lips

He might proclaim the victorious shouts to follow. In that sense this word also becomes a word of victory. Let us not stress the less the humanity of Jesus. Let us rather emphasize the more His divine consciousness of the glorious work of salvation. And whatever may be the correct explanation of this word, let this truth sink deeply into our hearts: Our crucified Lord forever thirsts for our souls. He would have all of us know that the salvation which He wrought out on the cross is for us, and for all the children of men everywhere.

Jesus, in Thy thirst and pain,
While Thy wounds Thy life-blood drain,
Thirsting more our love to gain:

Hear us, Holy Jesus.

Thirst for us in mercy still;
All Thy holy work fulfill;
Satisfy Thy loving will:

Hear us, Holy Jesus.

"It is finished."

For those who see Jesus only as one of the world's great religious teachers, the next word, "It is finished," can have very little significance. What is finished? What has been carried out to completion? Does it only mean that life is finished? Is this just the cry of a dying idealist, who has seen his dreams come to an abrupt and tragic close?

To the Christian, who has sat at the feet of Jesus, these words mean so much more. It is significant that Christ spoke them with a shout. St. Mark tells us that the centurion who stood by the cross and heard Jesus' last words, was so impressed that he said, "Truly this was the Son of God." Perhaps he had often witnessed death but this was the first time in his experience that a man in the power of death could muster so much

strength as to proclaim his dying words with a shout. Usually they are whispered and indistinct. It is significant that the evangelists are in agreement here. Death did not overtake Christ. Christ went to meet it. So this word is not the cry of a despairing soul who sees his dreams destroyed. It is the triumphant shout of the victor. Of course, I cannot tell you what was finished. Not, at least, in detail — all that came to completion in this word. For that word carries us back into the eternities of God. It tells us of a Heavenly Father who in the faraway reaches of the past made His plans to save the world. It takes us through the pages of the Old Testament and permits us again a glimpse at the promises of God. It makes us see the saints of old as they point with unflinching faith to the Saviour to come. And it must take us through the days of our Lord's earthly sojourn and tell us once again all that He said and did. It shows us His heart and love seeking the sinner's salvation. Somehow it must make all of us join with St. Paul in singing his triumphant song,

O death, where is thy sting?

O grave, where is thy victory?

Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through
our Lord Jesus Christ.

"It is finished" — man's salvation is complete. That is the meaning of this word for us. What we can never do He did for us. Can my little mind take that in? Of course not. I can only with humble gratitude receive it, and believe it.

O perfect life of love!

All, all is finished now;

All that He left His throne above

To do for us below.

No work is left undone
Of all the Father willed;
His toil, His sorrows, one by one,
The Scripture have fulfilled.

In perfect love He dies;
For me He dies, for me;
O all-atoning Sacrifice,
I cling by faith to Thee.

"Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

And now, with His mission entirely accomplished, it was not with a cry of anguish that our Lord closed His lips in death. It was rather with a beautiful prayer that the Lord of Life laid down His life. "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." How the believing heart has cherished this word!

We know that one of the things Jesus came to do was to give man a deeper and fuller understanding of God. We remember how He guided His disciples and followers to think of Him as Father. It was ever so He spoke of Him. It was so He addressed Him in prayer. Without a doubt this word alone has done a great deal to establish a tenderer and more loving relationship between man and God. To the Christian, God is not some strange faraway deity, cold and forbidding. He is the Father to whom we go, to use Luther's words, in all "cheerfulness and confidence." Jesus has made us think of God as the One who is seeking us, even as the father seeks to win a difficult child. It is not that we have adopted Him as Father. It is rather that He, in Christ, has chosen us to be His children. To sit at Jesus' feet and hear Him speak of God is to have the cold, awful, jealous God fade into the background and to feel the warmth and tenderness of the kindest friend we can ever know put His arms about us. It is to have fear displaced by

love. How poor we would be if Jesus had not come to reveal to us the Father! How thankful we are for this last word of our Lord on the cross.

There have been men who have sought to say this last word of Jesus before death claimed them. The beloved Bishop Polycarp, who in his great age mounted the martyr's funeral pyre, spoke them in his dying moments. Huss and Luther did too. I suppose many others would dearly love to say them when their turn comes to go down into the valley. By all means let this be our sincere, fervent desire. But in one sense these words can never be ours. To Christ they were confident words, indicating the peace of the achievement in the preceding word. To us they can at best be a prayer of faith and hope. But to pray them even so is to know the peace which passeth all understanding. All of us must go some day that way which leads into the shadow. Please God we may go with our hand in Christ's committing our spirit to our heavenly Father.

The words of Jesus on the cross are words exceedingly precious. The Church would be poor indeed without them. They take us from earth to heaven, yes, from hell to paradise, from the inhumanity of man to the boundless grace of God. In them we look once more into Christ's great heart of love. To hear them again is to feel the victory He attained for us. They are triumphant words — all of them. Surely, to hear them is to say of Him who spoke them, "Never man spake like this man."

Saturday in Holy Week

THE WORLD'S DARK NIGHT

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People's Evangelical Lutheran Church

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Saturday in Holy Week

Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.

Psalm 30:5

THE WORLD'S DARK NIGHT

Psalm 30:5

It is not so difficult in our day to achieve some understanding of the "dark night of the soul" that must have been the lot of the followers of Jesus while He lay in the tomb. Fear, bewilderment, even despair were writ large upon their faces as they came to believe that their hopes and aspirations lay buried in the rock. It was a pause in their lives that was never forgotten. In the awful silence of that moment life itself seemed to stand still, shrouded in a mysterious darkness that would yield no light, no meaning. The pervasive melancholy, manifest in their muffled voices, was like a funeral dirge sung for man himself. Against the experience of that moment no man there could say that he was the captain of his soul. They only knew that they were alone! All that had been their strength and inspiration in bygone days was suddenly blacked out. It was life itself cut loose, adrift! There was no lamp for their feet; no light for their path.

The holocaust of war has been productive in our time of a kindred mood of quiet desperation. For many life is standing still. Fear and bewilderment haunt the hearts of men as civilization pauses between a war and an uncertain peace. The world appears to be a kind of burial ground in which has been laid away man's fondest hopes and dreams. In the confusion and chaos there is no sense of direction and life loses its purpose,

its meaning. One can feel the pulse of our time and sense the frustration in its rapid, erratic beating. Like the little band of Christ's pilgrims, world society has lost its bearings and stands dazed by the very fact of the wilderness. In the midst of a restless activity that drugs the spirit and clouds the mind, one is aware of a pause as mankind itself stands on tiptoe, listening and waiting. Along with the tremor of anticipation there is the fearful awareness of uncertainty. In the twilight and across the centuries the prophet of God speaks to us: "And then (so the Lord of hosts declares) the peg driven in so firmly shall be wrenched out and give way, till everything that hung upon it shall come down." As the peg gives way and so much of our world comes tumbling down about us, we hear again the sad, wistful refrain of the Black Man's hymn, "O Lord, what a mourning, when the stars begin to fall."

The spirit that dominated the minds and hearts of the disciples was not wholly akin, however, to that of a fatal pessimism, as if God had died. They were not men out in the darkness howling over the grave of God. The drama of the trial and crucifixion of their Lord had moved so swiftly that they had been caught in a kind of spiritual lag. Something like that has happened to us. We have been caught in the backlash of a passing day, in the jarring reaction of a world falling apart but not destroyed. We are not altogether dead men even when our hopes are dead. Sometimes the pangs of birth are confused with those of death. The darkness of the womb precedes the light of life.

In lieu of their past associations with the Christ, it does seem strange that in that moment of darkness the disciples should have lost the memory of His note of warning and His word of preparation for the experience that shook them to the foundation of their being. We wonder how they could have

thought that the forces of nature, military might, and the vested interests of a political ecclesiasticism might have blacked out God in the face of Jesus. Yet it had meant ultimately only a brief pause while memory and expectation ceased to be and time stood still. Even as the question was asked the stone was rolled away and the last vestiges of reflected light from the empty tomb gave promise of the dawn. Already there began a burning in their hearts in high anticipation of that great culminating emotion expressed in simple words: "It is the Lord." As the shadows melted away, they stood resplendent in the glory of His presence. No longer did they stumble in the dark looking for a way. Following Him, they became the roadmakers of the world.

Were those humble fishermen to see us against the backdrop of our historical heritage so richly interwoven with the living presence of the Christ, might they not be filled with wonderment that we have come to such a time as this? Might they not be amazed that we have forgotten so much and remembered so little? Seeing our efforts shot through and through with a materialistic will to live, might they not stand in awe of our impoverishment in respect to the things of the spirit? A highly cultured and beautiful woman, after reviewing her life, said with a sigh, "We have everything — and nothing." At the very moment when we of the Western world thought we had everything, most of it turned to ashes in our grasp. We had built too many of our houses upon the sand.

When Peter turned to those about him and said, "I go a-fishing," there was not much enthusiasm in that attempted return to the past. There is even less hope for us today in any kind of backward look. Many of us feel as if we were out in some great open field with a multitude of voices crying for our

attention. The way out is suggested by the reaction of a young man to a meeting where he had heard E. Stanley Jones. As he left the hall, he kept repeating to himself, "I will say 'Yes' to Jesus." It was across that simple bridge of "Yes" that he walked out of the slough of despair onto the solid ground of hopeful, purposeful living. Yes, even in our time, "Jesus calls us, o'er the tumult of our life's wild, restless sea."

We shall have to see our world in the perspective of the words of Christ when He said: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." In the midst of so much that is perishing, here is an anchor for the spirit of man. Here is something that is deathless and permanent. As Phillips Brooks once wrote: "You never get to the end of Christ's words. . . . They contain life. They pass into proverbs, they pass into laws, they pass into doctrine, they pass into consolation; but they never pass away." Among many of the imperishable promises in the words of Jesus is that of power. He is not speaking of atomic power but of the power of the Holy Spirit. He is not speaking of a power that would crush and enslave, but of a power that would build and set free. In these days of anxiety, perplexity and uncertainty, here is a mighty assurance. Here is health again for the nations. Here is the source of a courage and faith that can bring us out of the darkness into His marvelous light.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the answer to the question that hangs everywhere upon the lips of men. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and these are the lights that illumine the questing spirit of man; that give sinew and courage and hope for the victory that is not of the moment but for all eternity.

Easter Day

CHRIST YET WALKETH

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Easter Day

The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him. . . . But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, and seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they said unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God. Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.

John 20:1-2, 11-18

CHRIST YET WALKETH

John 20:1-2, 11-18

"Now is Christ risen from the dead!" Say it again — and again — and again! "Now is Christ risen from the dead!" It's the only thing you want to say, and can, as you stand to sing or kneel to pray on Easter Day. The "smart" clergyman who wishes you this morning a "Merry Christmas" is not smearing your indifference; he's actually speaking on your behalf. You come to worship on Christmas and Easter at least, because those are days for affirmation — not argument. Christ's nativity and resurrection, intellectually, are the two greatest stumbling blocks in our faith; but spiritually they are the most vital sources of our religion. And that's why you crowd the doors today. You have come not to find an empty tomb but to find the Risen Christ. If you meet Him on Easter morning, you shall need no argument. If you do not meet Him, all other argument will be futile.

That's why I want to introduce you this morning to the beginning of the story, where the revelation has its roots. The Easter story opens, not with the precipitate judgment of nineteen centuries, but with a personal experience. The Easter story begins with Mary Magdalene. Mary had come to Jesus almost insane — beside herself — with the life she had been leading. She had been inwardly torn by seven devils. And Jesus had given back to her the self-respect she had thrown

away; He had given back to her a belief in life and in God. He had literally integrated her — made her whole. While He was in the world He was her sanity, her peace, her inspiration. He had, as it were, kept the devils at bay. But He had been crucified. He was gone, taken from her — and Mary was weeping hopelessly among the opening blossoms of Joseph's garden. Now all was lost; she had nothing to live for any longer; and like a cloud gradually enveloping the sky, she felt the old insanity creeping back and hopelessness taking possession of her. "Where have they laid Him?" she cried in her desolation. "They have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid Him."

Christ — Her Need

Will you read that last sentence once again? Read it aloud to yourself and put the accent where it belongs. "They have taken away *my* Lord." I dare say you'll have an easy enough time of it to speak of "the Lord" — but make it "*my* Lord," and at once your voice is subdued. This was not only the Christ, but *her* Christ — the One she sought as the fulfillment of *her* need. It would have mattered very little to Mary where they had taken Him; where they had laid Him; or what had become of Him — if she could not have said "*my* Lord." And then, suddenly, He spoke to her, and she saw Him there in the early light of dawn.

It was not because she was near the place where He had been buried that she saw Him first. It was because she needed Him most. It was because she was more eager and more receptive than anyone else and because she was more utterly dependent on His presence than anyone else, that He was able to manifest Himself to her first. There were others that morning wondering how they were going to get along without Him, but she knew that without Him she couldn't get along.

Today, strangely enough, the same despairing cry is being raised. "They have taken away the Lord" and we know not where they have laid Him. There are those who would rob Him of His deity and give Him an ordinary grave in a potter's field. There are others who would not deny that Christ was divine, but they would exalt their own human natures to His level. Some would emasculate the atonement and speak of His death as a beautiful example of a brave martyrdom. Still others would tell us that there is a Spirit in the world today — but not too holy, and certainly not the conqueror of death. And as for coming again — this Christ — well, it smacks too much of wishful thinking.

They have been trying to take Him away, the God-man, the crucified, the resurrected one, the He-who-shall-come-again — and they'll succeed too, unless we have learned to say to Him out of the desperateness of our need, "My Lord and my God."

If this is just Easter; well, it's merely a story; but if it's *your* Easter and *my* Easter, then it's an experience. If I can behold Him in His person and in His work, and be constrained to say "*my* Lord" — nothing can take Him away; nothing can kill Him.

Christ — the Seeker

You will remember that Mary did not meet Him because she was near his tomb. The amazing and comforting truth that leaps at us out of the New Testament stories of Easter is that the Risen Christ was seeking His disciples far more eagerly than they were seeking Him. They did not meet Him because they took some special road where He was likely to be; He met them on the roads they walked. Jesus met them! He met the women on their way from the tomb. He met the two disciples on the way to Emmaus. He came to them when they were

hidden behind barred doors and windows for fear of the Jews. He made a return trip to that same room especially to see Thomas. He met them again by the sea of Tiberias and gave a special message to Peter. They did not meet Him because they went where He was; they met Him because He went where they were. Sometimes they did not know Him, but He took the trouble to reveal Himself to them. He sought them without ceasing. There must have been many others to whom He spoke during those marvelous forty days who thought they were being addressed by a gardener or a fisherman. But those who had need of Him, He sought — and saved.

Christ Yet Walketh

Hear, then, the message of Easter! "Now is Christ risen from the dead." "Lo! Jesus meets us risen." He is walking alive and glorious among the blossoms, looking for us as He looked for Peter and John. The question is: Do we really want to meet Him? Dare we look in His eyes? Have we courage enough to walk in His company? Does not our need risk claiming Him? Do we love Him enough to give Him a chance to reveal Himself to us?

We shall not come to Him by any intellectual search or argument, any more than Mary could have found Him that first Easter morning by a careful examination of the tomb or the garden. A minute and critical study of the historical sources may lead us to a belief that the tomb was empty, but to find the empty tomb is not to find the Risen Christ. A profound philosophic argument may convince us that resurrection is a reasonable thing, but that is not meeting with the living Lord. "He may well be loved, but not thought." He responds to the needy and loving heart, for it is love alone that takes the veil from our eyes. "Christ yet walketh on the earth, and talketh

still as once with those disciples on the road to Emmaus, where they walk and are sad, whose vision of Him then was His victory over death and that resurrection which all His lovers should share. . . ." Yes, Christ yet walketh the earth, as Robert Bridges said. And we may meet Him and be filled with joy unspeakable. "Now is Christ risen from the dead!" Hallelujah!